CHRIST IN THE HOME 3

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(Translation from the French)

TRAINING

THE FIRST YEARS

In his book *"Something of Myself for My Friends Known and Unknown,"* Rudyard Kipling uses as the keynote for the first chapter, the following quotation: "Give me the first six years of a child's life; you can have the rest."

How parents ought to meditate on those words! Why did Rudyard Kipling speak in this vein?

Before these first six years there is of course the question of heredity. Every man is an heir and every man is an ancestor. Children do resemble their parents. We have considered this before.

There is a second kind of hereditary influence—the formation that is given even before marriage by the father and the mother. "When does the education of the child begin?" Napoleon was asked. He replied, "Twenty years before its birth in the education of its mother."

From its mother? From its father too. But the mother is unquestionably a prime influence since until the child is at least six the principal care of the child is in the hands of the mother.

What a mistake to let a child give in to all its whims!

"But he doesn't understand," people say. "You can't reason with a baby in the cradle."

No, of course not, but from the cradle on, the child can be taught many things well. Not by reasoning but by habit- formation.

Here are two mothers; both of them have a baby. Naturally both babies cry when they want their desires known. In one case, the mother who knows that all the needs and legitimate wants of the baby have been satisfied, lets it cry; it should like to advance if it could, the time for its bottle. No, it will be served at the right time, not before. The little one soon perceives that no one pays any attention to its demands and ceases its tempestuous howling.

In the other case, the minute the baby begins to cry, the mother dashes to soothe it. She cannot resist her baby's cry.

Instead of rearing it for itself, she rears it for herself, because she suffers too much from hearing it call or because its tears unnerve and disturb her. She gives in. She is lost. The little one is going to become frightfully capricious. Later she will not be able to control it. "Cry away my little man; you don't need a thing," would be a more wholesome attitude than yielding, provided of course, she knows that the baby is all right and that her conduct is not motivated by laziness but by a true desire to train the child.

That is only one detail. But in everything she should be guided by the same principle—the true good of

the child. Then at six years it will know how to obey. And if the mother follows through progressively with the development of the child, helping it to use proper]y its young liberty, she has the game in her own hands. All is not finished. It might be more correct to say that all is beginning; nevertheless the mother has successfully come through a vital stage. Up to this point it is properly called training, a most necessary period indeed. This training will develop into real education. If the early training has been lacking, the succeeding education becomes almost impossible; for how can one erect a stable structure on a volcano; how build a firm will on a nature perpetually wavering and swayed by caprice?

Kipling was right. In the light of the truth he expressed let me correct, if necessary and if there is still time, my method of acting.

LOVE FOR CHILDREN

IT IS essential to love children enough:

- To be willing to have them.
- To be able to endure their demands.
- To be able to supernaturalize one's love for them.
- To be willing to have them: I meditated on this point when I considered the law of fecundity and charity in marriage.
- To be able to endure their demands. Very little children have no defense and no power. Someone must always come to their assistance. Happy those who can guess these needs of theirs. Mothers generally know the secret of that. But just the same the baby will cry, become restless and set up a howl. Every baby in the cradle is a revolutionary in the bud; the best established customs ought to give way to its caprice, or so it thinks, and if its desires are not obeyed, it storms and puts the house in an uproar.

  Furthermore the child is born cunning. It finds out very quickly the best ways to get what it wants, not through reasoning but by intuition. Such an action, such an attitude produces the desired result; the opposite way of acting does not work. There is no more limpid logic to be found anywhere.

  Nor any more transparent pride. It knows itself to be the center of the household and is not ashamed to act the part. It is a monarch. Papa and mamma, brothers, sisters, and all the other members of the household make up its court, each one dancing attendance to its thirty-six wills. Furthermore, it distributes as rewards the favor of its broad smiles.

  Later it will have to play, jump about and run; to break things will be a delight; so too will it be fun just to sit still and listen to a story. The little girl will be taken up with the care of her doll and if her elders have bought her a doll that says papa, mamma, they need expect to hear nothing else all day! The little boy will play soldier or train or if he has received a drum or whistle for Christmas, the household will be well aware of it!

  Parents should take serenely and as a matter of course the baby's pranks and outbursts, working at the same time toward a wise training, the prelude of a wise education. They should expect their growing children to make noise, to be curious, to want to touch everything; furthermore, they need not feel obliged constantly, to put a damper on their romping and their noise; whenever and wherever it is necessary they ought to explain to the children what they may do and what they ought to avoid.

- To be able to supernaturalize one's love for them. Parents should strive to love their children not only because of their natural charm but for higher and truly divine reasons. "I love my children so much," parents say as if they were vying with one another. Mothers especially are likely to talk like that. It makes one want to warn them, "If only you could love them a little less but love them a little better." Or rather, since we never love too much but badly, "Love them as much as you wish but for their sakes, not for your own."

  For their sakes: Therefore do not give in to all their caprices; do not try to spare them every effort; do not treat them as little idols; do not teach them pride and vanity even from their earliest years.

  For their sakes: Therefore be alert to know what might harm them not only in what concerns their body but also in what might even remotely concern their soul.

  For their sakes: Therefore, try to discover behind the human silhouette of each of these baptized souls the Holy Trinity dwelling within them and the likeness of Christ; do not rest satisfied until all your training and education is directed to make of them truly holy tabernacles of the Most High and authentic continuations of Christ.

FROM THREE TO FIVE

AT THIS period of their life, children have not in general arrived at an awakening, at least not a complete awakening, of their moral sense. They are midway between the unawareness of their first years and a completely rational contact with life; their principal occupation is play—the little boy will be busy building and tearing down; the little girl will be busy scribbling away at indefinite designs or dressing and undressing her sawdust doll, the first in a series of many dolls.

They will have just the beginning of a contact—depending upon their family, their mother particularly—with the invisible world. They will learn their prayers, know that there is a God who is good and they will hear about little Jesus. They will also know that there are things that are forbidden, but they will not as yet see the wickedness of sin; they take what belongs to mamma without knowing that they are stealing; they do not always tell the truth without knowing really that it is an evil thing to lie and when they do speak untruly it is much more through an instinct of self- defense than through innate perversion. They would go to the end of the world for a kiss and much further still for a piece of candy. But if they must give up the piece of candy to a little brother or sister, they will do it with not too bad a grace but they will see to it that they get a lick of it themselves before parting with it; after all, aren't they being quite generous already? And if for Christmas mother has suggested that they sacrifice some of their sweets to little Jesus, they do it eagerly but see nothing wrong with coming back quietly later to eat up their sacrifices.

It is important to capitalize on this marvelous period of the child's life.

Since the child loves to imagine, it is necessary to suggest images to its mind and since the child needs to be educated, these images should be elevating. That can be done very early by using the lives of the saints, the life of Mary and of Jesus. Why not? How many details of Scripture are most picturesque and quite within the grasp of the child's mind; this is especially true if the Gospel episodes have first come by way of the mother's heart; she will know how to awaken without straining, instruct without fatiguing, and adapt it all to the mentality of the child.

A prime guiding principle here is never say anything that is not exact! Children at this age are extremely

docile. “Papa said it or Mamma said it,” makes it sacred. Therefore, pay great attention to the stories they are told, to the allusions made, or the conversations held in their presence.

At this age the child is inclined to refer everything to itself, but very likely to be disinterested in goodness. By nature it is selfish; it has a terrific sense of ownership; will share nothing; wants everything. Since it has numerous needs and knows itself to be little, it seeks to surround itself with the greatest possible number of things to its own advantage. But if little by little it is taught to look about to see that there are others less privileged, that to give up things for love of another is something fine, it will be found capable of remarkable generosity.

The child at this age has not since the time of its baptism become incrusted with the shell of negligence and the faults an adult might commit; simplicity is inherent in it; it is pure; it has infused Faith and the Holy Spirit in its soul is at ease.

But it is essential to avoid scandalizing the least of these little ones, giving them the example of evil, of impurity even material impurity, of lying, or of anger.

Further, a child of this age is readily distracted, forgetful, has its head in the clouds. You speak to it and it listens or does not listen as fancy strikes; it follows its own thought and interior emotion. Your commands fall on its ears like water on marble. You must catch its attention, reiterate your suggestions or commands without impatience on your part or fatigue for the child.

Constant attention is necessary to train them in manners, in proper sleeping habits, in conduct at table; to check the first symptoms of greediness, laziness, lack of discipline, sensuality. The child is still thoughtless but the educator must not be. Long explanations are not needed; a word, simple look go a long way and speak volumes at times.

Parents should never lose courage even if the results are imperfect. Let them examine their methods and change them if necessary. Let them see in these little ones only Christ—

“Whatsoever you do to these, the least of My brethren, you do unto Me.”

THE ART OF GIVING CHILDREN FAULTS

THERE are two great means of developing faults in children: First by giving them a bad example; second, by spoiling them.

GIVING THEM A BAD EXAMPLE: All men are imitators; children are more exposed than others to the appeal of imitation; they love to imitate adults, and by preference those within their immediate circle particularly their parents who appear to them as exceptional beings in whom there is nothing reprehensible.

Is the mother vain? The daughter too will be vain; she will speak, act, dress, not for an ideal of beauty in keeping with her condition, her station, but for the favorable opinion of others. She will strive to surpass all her companions, her friends, by the cut of her clothes and the extremes of style; she will attach a considerable, yes even an exaggerated, importance to the tiniest details of her costume; she will suffer a severe attack of jealousy when she believes someone outshines her.

Is the father proud? Does he try to exaggerate his good points and belittle those of others or refuse to recognize them? His son will be a snob, disdainful of others, self-sufficient, pretentious, arrogant,

obstinate and will manifest no understanding whatever as far as others are concerned.

Are the parents loquacious? Contentious? Sharp in their speech? Their children will be intemperate in speech, quarrelsome, envious.

Are the parents deceitful? The children are in danger of becoming liars. Are the parents generally indiscreet in conversation, passing judgments thoughtlessly? The children already too much inclined to judge everything from the height of their grandeur will pass snap judgments, unjust and untimely criticisms.

Do the parents manifest their love of ease, of wealth, even a thirst to acquire riches by any means? The children are likely to be selfish, attached to their own comfort, cheaters on occasion.

SPOILING THEM: Some parents are too harsh and do not encourage their children at all. Others, by far the greater number, are too indulgent, flatter their children, satisfy all their whims.

Parents who spoil their children do not seek their good, love them for their sakes. No, it is a form of self-love; the parents seek themselves in the child. Such parents cannot put firmness into the education they try to give; they cannot punish when necessary; prevent escapades; secure obedience; they cannot defend themselves against any caprices.

“But if I lack kindness,” you say, “my child will withdraw from me; in difficult times he will avoid speaking to me; I shall not have his confidence. If on the contrary I have multiplied my kindnesses to him, he will remain open, I shall keep a hold on him.”

There is no question here of failing in kindness; it is a question of forbidding oneself any weakness. Far from having to fear the loss of the child’s confidence, if one is judiciously firm, the parents shall win the child’s confidence because they are wisely strong. When the children understand that in the marks of affection their parents bestow on them they are not seeking something personal but only the good of their children, they will be quick to realize that in the severity their parents inflict on them, there is likewise no trace of caprice but only the desire for their good as before.

It is precisely that realization that has educative force—this contact with strong and detached souls.

THE UNTIMELY LAUGH

A FAMOUS French critic relates this incident about one of his colleagues. “He was only five years old and he had committed some misdemeanor. His mother who was busy painting put him outside her studio as a penance and closed the door to him. Through the closed door the little fellow using his most earnest and pleading tone begged for pardon promising not to be naughty again. His mother did not answer. He made so much ado that she opened the door and on his knees he crawled toward her, pleading with her as he came, in a voice so earnest and an attitude so pathetic that by the time he arrived before her, she could not refrain from laughing. Immediately he stood up, changed his tone, and said, ‘So,’ he cried, ‘since you are making fun of me, I will never ask pardon again.’ And he never did.”

To appear amused at an act of generosity on the part of a child is the best way to make it lose forever a taste for generosity. Beyond a doubt, the mother was not laughing at the sentiment that stirred the soul of her child, but only at his heroics in expressing it. But the child could not distinguish. She laughed; therefore she laughed at him; if she laughed at him, he must have seemed ridiculous; never again would

be put himself in a ridiculous attitude. His little conscience is geometrical. His reasoning is utterly simple but it is in keeping with his age.

Can anyone ever measure how much a poor child who has done wrong has to overcome himself in order to ask pardon? He blunders and then what happens? Can't you see? He is wounded by the pain he gave his parents, tortured perhaps by remorse, frightened by the prospect of punishment. His request for pardon is expressed in sobs and long drawn out breaths. But he is truly sorry. Born actor that he is, it is possible that he might deliberately exaggerate the outward manifestation of his repentance, but is it true? Most often the child is honest and, except where there is direct proof to the contrary, his action is sincere, expressing exactly what he feels.

How disconcerted he is then when his repentance is met in a way he so little expected and so misunderstood. Sometimes the child merely wants to confide a secret or in his simplicity he asks a question without realizing its import or he expresses an enthusiasm he hopes to have shared or a desire to be generous that he longs to have approved, but if he sees that no one listens to him or that his elders appear to smile at his beautiful dreams or his requests for explanations, he learns to close up like a clam; no one will ever know anything more of his little soul; he will keep his thoughts secret and will try to find for himself the answers to the troubling questions that torment him.

There is another kind of ill-timed laugh, the laugh of parents or others at the morally bad actions of a child.

In considering the behavior of children, careful distinction must be made between two kinds of acts: those which have no moral import such as skinning their knees in a fall while running, soiling their clothing through inattention, turning over an inkbottle through clumsiness, and those which do have moral significance such as stealing, lying, disobedience and lack of respect.

It sometimes happens that people are extremely severe and make much ado over the acts in which no moral responsibility is involved, but they joke or laugh at words and acts that are morally wrong. Nothing so deforms the consciences of children. They learn to consider as serious acts those over which their elders have made a scene but which actually are not serious at all; to consider as insignificant those acts which made others smile but which are morally quite serious.

All this means that as a parent, as an educator, I must be watchful over my smiles and my laughter. I cannot be inopportune in their use.

LOVE VERSUS MATERNAL INSTINCT

A MOTHER of a family, herself a noble and spiritual educator wrote:

"We never succeed in making of our children all that we should like to make of them; and sometimes we do not accomplish anything of what we thought we could accomplish. The role of educator in theory offers many charms but in its fulfillment how many thorns! Not to become discouraged is in itself quite an achievement."

The most important virtue to engender in the souls of children is confidence.

Children always have faults; they develop with age; when one fault is destroyed, another appears. What ought to be developed first is confidence; a confidence which will make them docile solely because of

the conviction that there can be nothing better for them than the arrangements of the persons who are training them; but when they seem to torment them or cross them, they truly have their good at heart. The most agreeable training is not always the most salutary. Far from it! Adversity and contradiction are useful for all ages but particularly for the young, to correct their violent tendencies and strengthen their undeveloped wills. For those who consider everything from God's viewpoint, adversity gives the final touch; it adorns as with gold one in whom virtue is deeply rooted. But how can one call upon this harsh instructor to teach one's very own children? Mothers are too tender to be perfect educators or rather their tenderness has about it too much sensitivity which, we might say, aggravates the eternal conflict between the spiritual man and the carnal man. Maternal love is often too much hampered by maternal instinct which protests and prevents the forceful action that ought to be taken.

This distinction between real maternal love in the full sense of the word and maternal instinct should be maintained; the author of the preceding lines is alert to the difference and concerned about not confusing them; one of her daughters had a particularly difficult temperament; the mother encouraged herself to exercise the necessary firmness with her just as with her other children:

I shall set myself the duty of not being weak, too easy, of not giving in to all their desires. I shall try to give them the reason for my decisions, but I shall believe that I do them a service by putting some obstacles to their desires. Kindness will dictate my conduct; I hope that kindness will render it bearable for them.

If I fear the opposition of a strong character and the tendencies of a spirit which promises to be frank and curious in Laurence, I fear in her sister the faults arising from an easier temperament which is avid for praise. Will she be able to hold her own with the firmness I should like to see her acquire? My God, I cannot foresee that; I place her interests as I place my own into Your Hands.

That is the way to act: To try to adopt toward each child the method most likely to succeed, and when that is done, to trust the rest to Divine Providence.

TRAINING IN OBEDIENCE

THE father is the father; the mother is the mother. Each one's role is different; together they must harmonize. This is particularly essential when there is question of the exercise of authority over the children.

The principal authority is centered in the father; the mother who is associated with him, shares this authority. Both have therefore according to their respective roles the mission to command; the father in a way that is not more harsh but more virile; the mother in a way that is not more easy-going—she ought to demand the same things the father requires and with the same firmness—but more gently expressed.

Parental action must be common, harmonious, coordinated, directed to the same end. Extremely unpleasant conditions are created if the mother for example tolerates an infraction of an order given by the father.

The father on his part should avoid too great sternness, an uncalled-for severity of tone or what is worse, cruelty. The mother should guard against weakness and insufficient resistance to the tears of the child or the cute little ways it has discovered for avoiding punishment or side-tracking a command.

She ought to be particularly cautious not to undermine paternal authority either by permitting the

children to disobey his injunctions or, under pretext of tempering the father's severity, by countermanding his orders. It is from the father himself that she should secure the necessary relaxation of requirements if she feels he is being too rigid; never should she on her own change a decision that the father has given. Otherwise the children will soon play the father and mother against each other; they will know that they can have recourse to mamma when papa commands something and they will be able to disregard the order. Father and mother both lose their authority in this way to their own great detriment. The wife discredits her husband in the eyes of the children and herself as well. Never should the children sense the least discord between their parents either in regard to their principles or their methods of training. Quick to exploit the rift, they will also be quick to get the upper hand. It is the ruination of obedience. The mother can blame herself for working forcefully for its destruction.

She is perfectly justified in trying to make the execution of the father's orders more agreeable; that is quite another thing. But in this case she must justify the conduct of the father and not seem to blame him by softening the verdict.

Husband and wife are but one; he, the strength; she, the gentleness. The result is not an opposition of forces but a conjoining of forces; the formation of a single collective being, the couple.

Another point in this matter of obedience: Never let the children command the parents. How many parents, mothers especially, betray their mission! Parents are not supposed to give orders indiscriminately but wisely; when they have done this, they should not go back on a command. To command little is the mark of firm authority; but to demand the execution of what one has commanded is the mark of a strong authority.

There should be no fussiness, no irritation, only calm firmness. The child, who becomes unnerved, and certainly not without cause, before a multiplicity of disconnected orders that fall upon him from all sides, submits before a gentle and unbending authority. Calmness steadies him and unyielding firmness unfailingly leads him to obey.

CHILDREN WHO COMMAND

IF THE training of the children from babyhood has been well done, there is the happy possibility that the parents can really be masters in their own home later on. Not that they need to exercise a fierce militarism; they should rather inspire a holy and joyous liberty; but when they give a command, the children must know that there is nothing for them to do but obey.

They will give few commands, avoiding such perpetual admonitions as "Stand up straight! Don't slouch! Do this. Don't do that," which irritate children to a supreme degree, weaken authority, and in time nullify the effect of any effort to command. In the whirlwind of commands and prohibitions in which they are caught, children can no longer distinguish between important issues and details. Not having the strength to observe all the directions they receive, they decide quite practically to observe none except when a painful punishment impresses them with the need to obey. Although the parents should give few commands, they must abide by what they have commanded and see it through. If children note that it is easy for them to wear out the patience of those who issue commands or prohibitions, and that sooner or later they will have the victory, they will unconsciously or even through a perversity that will always increase, set about to maneuver more and more triumphs for themselves.

"Leave that door handle alone!" Fine. The child hears the command. A second later he is at the handle again. Again he is told to leave it alone. The child resigns himself and for some time does not go near the door. Will he make a third attempt? Why not? After the second injunction mamma generally says no more. As a matter of fact, he renews his disobedience. Mamma lets it pass. She is conquered.

She will be conquered forever.

That is just one example of ten thousand where training falls short.

But when children know that what is said goes, the temptation to defy a command does not so readily come to them; or if should it come and they yield, they know their parents will not let their disobedience pass and that they will pay the penalty; they know too that the punishment will be in proportion to the offense, neither too little or too much but exactly proportionate; they take it for granted.

Away with all fussiness however! Let children exercise some initiative. How many parents forget that they were once young and as a consequence what it means to be young.

In his book, *"My Children and I,"* Jerome criticizes in a humorous fashion the exaggerated notions of some parents who do not want to recognize the power for frankness in boys and girls of twelve, fourteen, or sixteen years. Veronica, one of the young daughters of the home, finding that the discipline of the house was too rigid protested with the comment, "If grown-ups would be willing to listen, there are many things we could explain to them."

She decided to write a book in which she would give parents some wise advice. "All children will buy it," she said, "as a birthday gift for their father and mother."

Veronica was doubtless somewhat presumptuous but not stupid. People can learn at any age. Even from their children. Even when their youthful lessons are developed from impertinence. It is better, of course, not to need their lessons.

TRAINING IN DOCILITY

MANY parents complain that they can no longer get their children to obey.

Is it the fault of the children? Is it not rather the fault of the parents? A failure in obedience because of a failure in authority?

To command requires as much abnegation as to obey. If a person commands to satisfy his need of imposing himself on others, to satisfy his vanity, to prove his power to himself, he has missed the purpose of authority. Authority does not exist for itself but for the good of subordinates.

Parents can go to the other extreme and let their children to their whims and fancies in order to escape imposing any inconvenience upon themselves, allowing everything to pass and even refusing to forbid what they should forbid. That too is a failure in their mission. To have authority is to have the obligation to exercise it—according to the circumstances and without exaggeration certainly—but it must be exercised and not held in abeyance; that would be a betrayal of a trust.

Authority is to be exercised; to be exercised within the limits of its control; that is its function. If through laziness or poor judgment authority is not exercised or is badly exercised, how can we be astonished that obedience is lost?

Authority supposes a soul at peace, a courageous soul, dominated by a sense of duty, devoted to the interests of the subject, free of capricious impulses and that sentimental concept of love which is often found in mothers who confuse tenderness with idolatry.

Parents and educators must arm themselves with courage to dare to take a stand against the caprices of their child. They must have keen judgment to know in which instances they should command or refrain from commanding, to be able to adapt the order to the capacity of the subjects, to be able to understand the subjects‟ desires and satisfy them, to oppose their whims, their impetuous desires and disordered impulses.

In all this there must not be the shadow of oppression. Parents should realize the children's need for distractions, activity, learning, and loving. They ought to satisfy them in everything that is legitimate. That will provide a generous principle by which they can refuse them what is not legitimate. In everything the parents should act with a balanced mixture of gentleness and firmness.

Certainly they should not govern their children in a way that suppresses their initiative. Their problem is not to develop paragons of perfection, children who are exteriorly docile but docile through passivity.

Parents should as often as possible insist that their children make their own decisions, assume their little or great responsibilities; but at the same time supervise and watch over them unobtrusively; be ready to help them if need be when they hesitate or arrive at imprudent decisions.

This implies that the parents strive less to develop a satisfactory exterior behavior than to fashion in the child a conscience that is exact and clear in the knowledge of its duties; it is essential that when a child obeys he does so not because of external constraint but through obedience to the law of duty, to the inward law formulated in the depths of his soul by God Himself.

The formation of the child's conscience is therefore inseparable from his training in obedience. Let the child know that he must obey only because he must above all obey God; parents and educators are only the intermediaries of God in his regard. Punishments which must follow wrongdoing will never be for him the indication of his parents‟ excitability or moods but always and only the justification of a moral principle that has been violated.

INTELLIGENCE AND FIRMNESS IN A MOTHER

CAN the mothers who are real educators be counted by the hundreds? Many see what ought to be done but do not have the courage to require it or rather to impose it on themselves to see it through. Others again have sufficient firmness of character but lack keenness, insight, psychology.

Madame Marbeau whose son was to become bishop of Meaux possessed the rare balance of intelligence and firmness.

One of the brothers of the future bishop had been naughty and troublesome at school and was sent home by way of punishment. At home he was obliged to recount his escapade. The child was difficult and it was not his first offense. Madame Marbeau marched him up to his room, closed the door behind them, took a switch and ordered the boy to take off his coat and a few more things. "My child," she said, "you are dishonoring your name. I am going to whip you for it so that you won't forget it. It grieves me to do so. I have a heart ailment and could die of emotion . . . at least my death would remind you not to offend God."

When her children were old enough to be able to take responsibility, Madame Marbeau gave each of them a watch, accompanying her gift with the wish "May all the hours of your life to the very last, mark the good you do. May you never have to blush for one of them."

She encouraged the older ones to offer sacrifices to bring blessings on their future home, "Offer that up for the one whom you will marry."

A mother ought to be willing to make her child shed tears if that is the only way to instill a lesson which other means have failed to inculcate.

Surely, the whole art of educating does not consist in the art of being severe; some parents are too stern and they create a depressing and disheartening atmosphere in the home; that is the other extreme of indulgence. Exaggerated repression and excessive weakness are both harmful. The one who must be most watchful against excessive weakness is the mother, to whom is attributed the quality of kindness as an almost natural instinct and whose whole vocation is bound up in kindness. In their early days the children will be tramping all over her feet, but when they grow older they will trample on her heart.

The child should be encouraged to the complete accomplishment of his duty; nor should the parents take over to spare him the necessity of effort; they should rather stimulate him to furnish his own effort. He should be given a taste for fundamental honesty very early in life, the understanding that time is money advanced to us by God to enable us to purchase not only our eternity but the grandeur and beauty of our present life.

Then at the opportune time the child should be directed to consider his future. After making of his present home an invaluable training center, let the mother use the thought of the future home he will establish as an incentive to needful renunciation and self-denial. Should a son or daughter give indications of a special attraction to the virginal state in a consecrated life, with what care should the mother watch over them. What a grace for the family if their dreams should be realized! But such graces are bought! By the sacrifices of the children. By the sacrifices of the parents above all, but primarily of the mother.

These are not the only characteristics of a solid training but they are important characteristics. Let me examine myself on them. What judgment must I pass on myself?

PICTURE STUDY

MOTHER has gathered her little world around the table. She has chosen a supply of beautiful pictures; there are all sorts of them.

"Now suppose everyone keeps still. Look well at these pictures and make your choice without telling it . . . Then in a few minutes you may each tell me in your turn which one you prefer. If you explain well why you prefer it you may have it to keep for yourself. All right, let's start. Is everyone here? Take time to think carefully. When you have all made your choice we shall begin to speak."

Soon little hands were busy fingering the pictures; indecision was evident on the children's faces. Finally their choices seemed to be settled.

"Very well, Peter, you begin."

Peter had been attracted by a troop of soldiers marching behind the red, white, and blue so he said,

“Because it has the flag of my country.”

What a beautiful lesson to develop, the lesson of patriotism, a lesson in humanity. Why should we love the world; why too should we prefer our own country? We should prefer it to the point of defending it if it is unjustly attacked. What is a just war, an unjust war? Is it sometimes permissible to kill? What is the duty of the leaders in war? Why should we salute the flag?

And all listen to the simple lesson so marvelously and expertly explained drawing great profit from it. A true course it is in philosophy, civics, international ethics, and will-training.

Little Louise decided on a picture of a beautiful baby by Reynolds, a pink, chubby baby with curly hair. She gives her reason in a tone of voice that reveals her budding maternal instinct, “I want it because it looks like my little brother.”

And Mother seizes her opportunity to explain the mother’s role, her joys, her difficulties, her responsibilities.

Jeanne, a robust girl, not blessed with much imagination shows great admiration for a very ordinary postcard representing two children in the country, standing before a rustic home at an outdoor fireplace roasting potatoes and chestnuts . . . She chose it because “it shows what we do on vacation when we have no more homework to do.”

This brings forth a little homily on energy at work, coupled with praise for the honesty of the child; the motive of choice alone is blamed as indicative of no great zeal for study.

Paul, whose stuffed pockets seem to contain a whole workshop—string, broken springs, rubber bands, and other odds and ends has been waiting a long time to explain his choice. “I like this airplane which is going to take off; see the pilot has put on his cap; he is going to take two passengers. I want to be a pilot when I get big . . .”

How many correct ideas to develop, enlarge and enrich; how many inferior sentiments to uplift; how many social principles to instill according to the capacity of these little minds and consciences so newly formed; how many futures to map out and how many vistas to open up.

There is nothing austere or forbidding here. It is life presented in beautiful simplicity. All the mother’s explanations are within the children’s grasp, but how richly instructive and informative! They had so much fun. And they learned so much.

IMPARTIALITY

ONE great principle of education that is of prime importance is that there must not be two systems of weights and two systems of measures in the family; it is necessary to treat all the children impartially.

The celebrated Carmelite, Mary of Agreda, whom Phillip IV of Spain did not hesitate to take as his confidante and advisor in matters of state and the government of men because of her spiritual insight and virtue, wrote the following advice to him on October 13, 1643 after she realized, either through spiritual lights or human reports, that he was inclined to yield to the ascendancy of a certain individual in his court:

“It would be better to put all (your counselors) on the same level by listening to all of them so that each

one believes himself to be your favorite without Your Majesty's according more to one than to the other. Thus God has placed the heart in the center of the body that it may vivify and stimulate all the members equally; the same sun lights us all without any distinctions."

This rule which Mary of Agreda gave Phillip IV for the government of Spain is very valuable within the family.

One or other of the children must not get the idea he is preferred; he will be tempted to abuse the situation. Above all, the other children must have no cause to believe that one of the members of the family is the object of special predilection.

All ought to believe that they are, each of them individually, the privileged one; and that because actually and not as a pretense the father and mother make no distinctions of person but give to all their maximum love.

If any exception must be made let it be for that one who is least gifted, the most sickly, who has the least defense.

In such a case only will the other children pardon partiality.

Generally, however, such advice need not be given to mothers. As Bishop Dupanloup explains, maternal love is so wide and deep that there is in it an innate and magnificent contradiction.

If her child is beautiful, richly endowed, how the mother cherishes it! If on the contrary, her child is puny, deformed by nature, she has treasures of affection for it such as she has for no other.

Here is the beautiful passage. It is taken from a volume which has not gone out of date; how many married people and parents could profit greatly by reading it and meditating on it: The name of the book is *"Letters of Direction on Christian Life*" and the particular sections referred to now are the passages on Marriage, Motherhood, and Conjugal Fidelity:

Maternal love possesses two contrary impulses which are characteristic of it. We could not measure either of them, nor could we pass them by in silence.

The mother loves her fortunate child, the handsome child, the prosperous child, for its happiness, its beauty, its prosperity; there is in this a just pride which belongs to maternal love and does not sully it. At the same time, the mother loves her child who suffers, who is listless, who is deformed because of its suffering, its languor, its deformity; and her love goes to terrifying extremes.

One must see a mother looking at her infirm and deformed child . . . It is as if she wants to fill up all the voids of that being, that she wants to enclose it within herself so that curious and unkind looks cannot reach it.

If she has a wayward child, it is this one she loves in spite of herself; if she has a sick child, it is toward that one she directs all her concern, and on the contrary should her child be a hero . . . how happy she is!

DIFFICULTIES OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

TO MAKE a true Christian of a child, four difficulties must be conquered:

- **THE CHILD HIMSELF.** He is light-minded, superficial, completely exterior. The invisible world

seems unreal to him. Doubtless, the infused faith received at baptism gives him a kind of aptitude for perceiving divine realities; and the educator will not fail to utilize and develop this aptitude. It still remains true that the child for whom the world of images alone has value is in grave danger of progressively losing interest in the Kingdom of God to give more and more attention to what Our Lord calls all these other things.

Furthermore, he is on the threshold of life and that life is the present life; he feels strong; death is far away. His very existence appears to him as something almost eternal. He dreams of marriage, thinks of a career and is immersed in distractions. He thinks very little about his soul if he thinks of it at all.

- **THE FAMILY CIRCLE.** The family encircles the child with a certain general atmosphere of ease, of comfort, of forgetfulness of the essential. The practice of Christianity within the family may be very weak; there may be a complete absence of good example. An exaggerated liberty in regard to reading may prevail; the newspapers and magazines brought into the family are perhaps most unchristian, utterly pagan in tone. And as for the religious observance of Sunday, it is reduced to a minimum and that minimum is merely routine. True piety is definitely lacking; so too is any semblance of regularity in rising and retiring; a shameless preoccupation with frivolities crowds out everything else. The development of a spirit of sacrifice and the formation of a religious spirit receives scarcely any attention.
- **SCHOOLS.** Let us consider only those schools in which religion is recognized. To whom is the religious instruction confided? How well is education to the supernatural safeguarded? Even in institutions where exercises of piety are held in esteem, is sufficient effort made to combat routine, to avoid blind imitation and to vivify religious practices? Is sufficient care taken to explain doctrine thoroughly? Is not a great deal of precious time lost in problems of apologetics while the children have very little acquaintance with the substantial realities of the deposit of faith? Is the teaching of Catechism carefully centered about the dogma of Grace and of Incorporation in Christ? Are the truths of faith made to live by being presented in relation to modern life, adapted to the needs of the young people and the needs of the time?
- **THE GENERAL EASYGOING ATTITUDE OF SOCIETY.** Father Gratry used to say that young people had difficulty escaping the two trials that their social environment imposes—the trial of fire and the trial of light.
  - **THE TRIAL OF FIRE**. By that Father Gratry meant the test of pleasure, the test of the senses. The great means of information are sometimes transformed into means of corruption. Reading, unbridled freedom, certain types of amusement finish the destruction. The world ridicules the chaste; materialism at times gross, at times refined, threatens to penetrate all of life especially now that the constraints of the war have been lifted.
  - **THE TEST OF LIGHT.** This, Father Gratry explains, is contact with pagan mentalities, with philosophies of skepticism and agnosticism as noisy as they are baseless but none the less alluring in an age of independence and awakening passions.

All these conditions point to the importance of a virile training of the individual from childhood; the need of a healthy and uplifting family life; the value of a solid intellectual formation that is thoroughly Christian; the necessity of a purification of the general atmosphere.

The children of today have been compared to “an invasion of little barbarians.” We must civilize these barbarians if we want to prevent the arrival of barbarism or a return to barbarism.

SUPERNATURAL MOTHERS

CHESTERTON expressed himself as well satisfied that education is entirely confided to women until that time when to educate becomes entirely useless—for, “a child is not sent to school to be instructed until it is too late to teach him anything.”

In other words, education depends on the training given during baby days and early childhood and such training is the concern of women. That is a certain fact. It is also a serious fact. Because at once there arises the problem: Are all mothers charged with educating their children capable of it?

Some women excel in child-training. And often they are equally successful in handling their children once they are grown.

How solicitously these mothers watch over their children even in their babyhood not only in concern for their bodily good but for their soul as well, warding off from them whatever could be a source of trouble later. With what love of God they profit by their babies‟ first glimmerings of reason to teach them how to fold their hands in prayer and lift their hearts to God. How zealously they prepare them for their First Holy Communion, speaking to them of the marvels of the Eucharist, encouraging them to generosity and love of Jesus Crucified.

Without any thought of self, but with joyful and supernatural austerity, they teach their children to make sacrifices, to think of others; with what divinely inspired skill they show them the immense needs of the world, make them think of little pagan children who have no Christian mother or father or brothers or sisters who have been baptized.

“Children are serious-minded, and to keep a childlike soul means precisely to continue to look at life with a serious attitude,” says Joergensen. Mothers with a supernatural spirit, whether they have read Joergensen or not, seem to use this idea as a guiding principle and by it help their children to preserve while growing up, the juvenile depth of their serious outlook on life.

Even when their children are grown, how they help them to develop this serious attitude and protect them from losing it or submerging it in an atmosphere of worldliness and frivolity! How earnestly they try to give their children true Christianity grounded much more in love than in fear; they do not constantly terrify them with the idea of sin; they lead them even more by example than by word, to look upon God as a God of mercy and not as a sort of “super- parent who is always dissatisfied, severe, angry, ready to forbid and to punish.”

Living a life of divine familiarity themselves, these mothers have learned the great mystery of “God nearby,” of God residing in the depths of the soul in grace, a God whose dearest wish is to draw us into closer intimacy with Himself.

It has been said that “there are two ways of giving the consciences of children an intense sense of the privation of God”; either by default, by never putting them in His presence; or by excess, by putting them in His presence in such a way that He becomes a nightmare to them from which they flee as soon as they realize that the whirl of life helps them not to think of Him.”

Supernatural-minded mothers would never fail in the second way. If their grown boys and girls remain in the state of grace, it is through a holy pride, an interior joy, the result of having been impregnated early in life with the conviction of God’s nearness, with the determination to remain forever living

tabernacles of the Trinity, other Christs.

Honor to these mothers, true educators!

EDUCATION TO THE SUPERNATURAL (1)

THIS does not mean education to piety. In Christian families this is properly provided for: The children are taught their prayers, how to go to Confession, how to prepare for Holy Communion, how to assist at Holy Mass and other church services, how to say the rosary. All this is fine, but perhaps it is not the essential!

The important thing is to teach the child who he is, who God is, and how God wants to mingle His life with his by coming to dwell in him. consecrating him thereby as a living tabernacle of the Most High. When the child knows all this not merely as bookish knowledge but as knowledge lived out and often recalled, exercised by his faith and his young good will, then and then only, will there be a solid foundation on which to build religious instruction, to justify and demand exercises of piety. It is absolutely essential that before all else the child be informed of the divine riches which his baptism brought him. It must be explained to him that the day he was carried as a little baby to be received into the Church, God came to take possession of his soul.

He should be taught that when people come into the world they do not possess this divine life. God gave it to Adam and Eve in the beginning but they lost it. Right here is a splendid opportunity to explain the greatness and goodness of God, the marvel of our supernatural life, how God created man greater than nature, how He wanted to make all of us His children. The little one knows well what a father is. Explain to him that God is our Father in order to give him what is essential in all true piety, a filial spirit and an understanding of how true it is to call God, Good.

The story of creation fascinates children; so too does the story of Adam and Eve and the Fall. What a lesson for the child is the example of the terrible punishment incurred by disobedience! . . . The divine life is lost! But God still loves His poor human creatures just as mamma and papa continue to love their child after he has done wrong. And what is God going to do to give back this lost supernatural life? When one commits a fault, he must make up for it to obtain pardon. Who can make up for such a fault? God asks His own Son to do it. His Son will come down to earth. And then follows the beautiful story of the Christmas Crib and the timely application of these truths: How we should pity those who do evil and if we can, help them get out of their misery, their bodily and spiritual wretchedness!

Not only will Jesus live upon earth with us but He will die for us after living more than thirty years over in a little country where we can find many souvenirs of His stay—the little town of His birth, the workshop of His foster-father, that noble carpenter named Joseph, the villages that heard Him preach to all, and especially to children, on how to get to heaven, the place of His death upon the Cross, that place of suffering where Mary His Mother stood beneath His instrument of torture . . . All that, all that so that John, Paul, James, Henry, Peter, Louise, Camille, Leonie, Germaine may be even while they are still on earth, little—and yes very great—living tabernacles of God who is Goodness itself; so that later in heaven they may be with the God of their hearts forever.

Religious instruction is not sufficiently centered; it is not centered about the central mystery of Catholicism. Even the catechism with its divisions of Dogma, Morals and the Sacraments—divisions that are perfectly logical and understandable but more adapted to theological authors than to the souls of

children—can, if we are not careful, make one forget the beautiful wholeness of Christianity which is superbly majestic in its architectural lines, clear, and pulsing with life.

EDUCATION TO THE SUPERNATURAL (2)

IT IS clear that everything centers about the dogma of grace and our supernatural elevation. The best way to develop this idea with the child is to use the technique of an object lesson and explain the rites and ceremonies of baptism to him. That will be a little drama in which he has been the hero, and consequently, it will hold tremendous interest for him. It is something about himself, it is his own story he hears; he will be delighted.

Describe the ceremonies graphically for the little one. As soon as feasible, take him to church. Before showing him the tabernacle, the Eucharistic dwelling, take him to the baptismal font: Here is where you became a living tabernacle of God. At the words of the priest, “Go out of this child, unclean spirit; give place to the Holy Spirit,” the devil was forced to leave you, because of the power Our Lord gave to His priests. Then the Holy Spirit came to dwell in you. And since the Holy Spirit is one with the Father and the Son, God in His fullness came to dwell from then on in your heart—yes, there are three Persons, but there is just the same but one God; there are five fingers but they make only one hand—and that one God in all three Persons dwells in you.

God does not have to use an airplane like the one you saw landing from its flight the other day, but He does come down from heaven to dwell in your soul; He came into each of us, Papa, Mamma and in you, in Henry and James and Pauline, in Genevieve and little Louise. He comes on His own without anyone else sending Him and His coming is very real. Besides all this, His dwelling in all of us does not keep Him from continuing to dwell in heaven, too. He is all-powerful; it causes Him no difficulty to be at several places at once. If He who exercises His power everywhere, comes especially into the souls of the baptized, it is to dwell there in a dwelling of love. When your godmother or your grandfather come to spend a few years at your house, how happy you are! It is to give you pleasure that they come; and they bring with them goodies and lovely presents.... God does the same thing when He comes to stay in you—He brings presents with Him; we call these gifts graces; that means favors, gifts He is not obliged to give but which He gives just because He is so good. Good, did we say? Extraordinarily good! Much kinder than godmother or grandpa; kinder even than Papa or Mamma. He is the One who made the kindness and goodness of fathers and mothers and of all good people on the earth. Think how much greater is God’s goodness since He possesses all this goodness put together and a great deal more besides!

But then if God is like that, how ought James and Joseph and Henry and Isabelle and Louise and Madeline behave themselves? Well, first of all, they should never do anything that would chase God from their souls; to do that is what we call mortal sin; mortal, because it forces God to leave just as if it killed Him. God cannot die, but it is just as if the person would say to Him, “I don’t want anything more to do with You; if I could do away with You, I would do so!” That is why mortal sin is such a vile thing.

And it is not enough for you to keep from driving God out of your soul; no, there in the depths of your heart, you should try to keep Him company. Don’t you think so? How sad that would be if He would be there within your soul and you would not pay any attention to Him, and seem to attach no importance at all to His Presence. That would not be very nice. You ought to visit Him there within your soul, in the morning, in the evening and often during the day; speak to Him; tell Him that you love Him very much.

He who loves as a real Christian, a truly baptized soul, keeps God company since God is with him all the time.

EDUCATION TO THE SUPERNATURAL (3)

SINCE God is always present in the soul of the baptized person—provided that person has not driven Him away through mortal sin—with what respect should he treat not only his soul but also his body!

Mothers always dress their little ones in a beautiful white dress for their baptism. This is to show that later they ought never cover their souls with stains of sin. If muddy spots on lovely white material is ugly, how much uglier are sin stains on the soul!

That is also why the priest after bringing God into the soul of the tiny baby by saying as he pours the water, “I baptize thee in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,” hastens to add the injunction, “Receive this white garment and carry it undefiled to the Throne of God.” The whiteness of the garment symbolizes the purity of the soul.

When we have to appear before God at the end of our lives, what will He ask us? “Have you been faithful? Have you always respected the beautiful virtue of purity? Or is your soul stained by sin? Have you committed sins? Mortal sins? At the moment death struck you down, did you have God in your heart or had you driven Him away as if you wanted nothing more to do with Him?

“You drove Him away? Ah, well, since that is how it is, I want no more to do with you: I too will drive you away, begone!”

It is just as a father might call before him his child who had insulted him or tried to kill him; he would say, “ I no longer look upon you as my son. You are not worthy to remain in the house. Get out! I will never speak to you again, I will never love you again!”

How dreadful to be driven away by God because we tried to kill Him with sin in our soul; because we tried to drive Him away . . . to drive Him, God who is so good, from our heart!

We must indeed pray that such a thing never happens!

If we want to die without stain of sin upon our soul, we must live without staining our soul by such ugly defilements. Now since God dwells within our soul and since our soul is enclosed within our body, then we must also keep our body pure. We must never use it to commit sin. We should always look upon it as a kind of church in which God dwells. What would we say of naughty boys who would throw pebbles into the window of the parish church or mud from the street on the decorations or the altar inside? It would be an insult hurled at Jesus who stays there in the tabernacle so that we can go to Him to tell Him that we love Him and that we are happy to be with Him.

A little baptized child is like a church, but a living church. Jesus and the Child

How should we introduce Jesus into the life of the little one? Marie Fargues, a one-time educator, suggests the following psychological procedure: “You love Jesus very much, don’t you?” the mother asks the little one in a tone of voice that calls forth a fervent “yes.” Mamma must love Jesus to speak as she does. Therefore, Baby loves Him, too, and he wants to show it. He will clutch the picture of Jesus that the mother holds out to him, and kiss it with much ado. A statuette, a crucifix, a medal—these objects offer no direct interest to the child other than their polish or their color; mamma’s face is

certainly softer and more pleasing. But if one is to embrace, there must be something to embrace; and how can one show that one loves without embracing. That is the sole reason of existence for the statuette, the picture, or the medal of Christ as far as the baby is concerned. People don't embrace just anything, like papa's paper or the sugar bowl; these things have other uses. But the things that are connected with the Name of Jesus, these things one kisses for love of Jesus.]

But Who is Jesus? Who is Jesus? A baby does not ask that question. Jesus is a fact, like papa or mamma. And the little one is not in the least disturbed about giving the same name to quite different objects, a medal, a picture, or a crucifix. For, in the beginning, the picture, the medal, or the crucifix, is Jesus. It will take time for the little one to understand that these things are merely representations of Jesus.

Little by little, the child will begin to distinguish the person from the representation and will begin to build up a more correct concept: Jesus is at one and the same time, the One who is represented on the medal, the One who lives in the tabernacle, the One who is on the crucifix, the One who is on the picture, the One who lives in the church, and the One who is in mamma's heart after she goes to Holy Communion.

From then on, the clarification can be continued by helpful statements or questions: "Yes, Jesus is here," or "Jesus did that" or, if we are in church, "Where is Jesus?" At Christmas time when the little one pulls on mother's sleeve, insisting, "I want to go over and see little Jesus in the pretty crib," a splendid opportunity presents itself to explain the difference between the figure of Jesus in the crib and Jesus present in the tabernacle.

The transfer from the concept of Jesus to that of God is evidently a delicate step. The mother has told the child that God is everywhere, sees everything, but that He has no body. Now Jesus has a body. All that is not very clear to the child. Little by little, it will become so.

God is at one and the same time, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. There is God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost and they have existed from all eternity. It is the Son, however, who became Jesus when the Blessed Virgin gave Him a body, and He walked among men on earth.

Thus the little one through acquaintance with Jesus rises to knowledge of God. That God should have become man, is not at all astonishing to the child, and still less astonishing is it to him that Jesus had a mother.

Thus, bit by bit, things are seen in their proper relation. There cannot be complete clarity all at once. However, by means of successive bits of information, and above all by successive attempts at prayer, the little one enters into contact with Jesus; this contact is more of the heart than of the mind.

Historical and doctrinal ideas will be added later to complete the child's concept. Even at this early age he has become acquainted with the Triune God and the Incarnation. The cross, too, has been revealed to him. It is a delight for the child to hear the story of Jesus‟ life, and, in the retelling how many ideas can be given, how much curiosity satisfied, how many lessons taught!

Since Jesus loves children so much—and we know that He does from the gospel story of Jesus blessing the little ones— since He has loved people so much and done so much for them, should not little John, or Lucy, or Alice, love Jesus, too, with all their heart; should they not learn from Him how to make a generous sacrifice when the opportunity presents itself?

THE FATHER WHO DOESN'T PRAY

LITTLE Paul who is only four-and-a-half years old, is kneeling beside his bed saying his night prayers; they seem to be very long.

"Haven't you finished your prayers?" asks his nurse. "Yes," answers the child slightly embarrassed. "Well, then, what are you doing now?"

The child blushes and murmurs timidly, "I say two of them every night—my own and papa's. I heard him refuse mamma when she asked him to say his prayers; so now I am doing it for him."

Precocious, would you say? Maybe so. But have children not often startled us with their penetration?

How foolish are those parents who believe they can fail in logic before their children! How little do they know of the workings of those little minds and those little hearts! How little do they know how these little ones can put to use what they hear!

Lady Baker, a convert, writes in her book *"The House of Light"* that when she was a child of about eleven years, she overheard a conversation between her father and her mother on the subject of religion. The father was saying, "I heard a good sermon today; it pointed out how the Reform was a great mistake and that England would have been much better off without it...."

"Be still," interrupted his wife in a scandalized tone, "be careful before the children."

"I was sent off to my studies," continues Lady Baker, "and I heard no more of the conversation; but I took to dreaming over these strange words."

That very evening while taking a walk with the maid, she asked to visit a Catholic church. From that date, she says, there was born in her the desire to study the beginnings of the pretended Reform and to change her religion later should this study prove that what her father had said was true.

It may be that I have not lost the habit of prayer, thanks to God's grace, but it could easily be that I do not let my children see me praying often enough. To pray, and to let one's children see that one prays, are two different things. It is not enough to pray as an individual only. My duty as head of the family is to pray in the name of the family, in the sight of the family, and with the family. My boys must know that their father honors God; they must see that he conducts himself respectfully before Him; they must learn from his example the great duty of adoration and worship. Prayer, at least evening prayer, should be said in common.

In many families where all gather together at the end of the day to honor God, it is the mother who leads the prayer until the time comes when each child will be able to take a turn. It would be much better if the father would take the lead. It is the function which belongs to him, a function which is almost priestly in character.

Should it ever happen that I have occasion to pass unfavorable judgment on a churchman, or on some religious incident—although it could seldom happen that such an action would be my right—I must take care as to who is listening. Children don't miss anything . . . let me give that some thought.

TABLE PRAYERS

A CELEBRATED economist, LePlay, wrote "Until I can say grace at meals without astonishing any of

my guests, I will not believe that I have done enough for the return of good habits." Grace at meals seems to be a simple detail. Are we not perhaps attaching too much significance to it?

Consider it a detail, if you wish, but it is a detail which proves much. Rene Bazin relates how edified he was while visiting in the north of France as a preparatory study for one of his novels, to observe how the family of an industrialist, in Roubaix, had said grace faithfully before meals, assigning each child a day to lead.

Another author relates the profound impression made on him by his visit to the home of an outstanding businessman in Antwerp. Before and after dinner, the eight children stood with their parents around the table while the father devoutly recited the meal prayers.

Where the practice of saying grace is found in a family, there is also found true family life blessed with children and with solid piety; there will be no selfishness; instead there will be found a love for tradition, respect for authority, and an undisputed reign of Christ over the home. Saying grace may be a small thing, but it is an indication of great things.

The Christian family will not be restored, nor will it be maintained, without the restoration and the maintenance of Christian practices—the noblest practices surely, and the most obligatory, but likewise the most insignificant in appearance. However, are there any which are truly insignificant?

"But these things will embarrass our visitors." Nothing forces them to pay you a visit, and if they want to do it, they undoubtedly respect the customs of the house, the crucifix on the wall as well as the tint of the wall, the normal acts of Christian life as well as the menus prepared for them. No one is obliging them to adopt your conduct, but they can at least accept it while they are with you.

The real motive, if you are truly honest, is not charity for others, but human respect and a concern for yourself.

You are afraid; you do not dare.

Your visitors will be either Christian or non-Christian. Why among Christians should one blush because of Christ? If the guests are not Christians, will they be astonished at Christian acts, knowing the atmosphere of the home and the character of those who dwell in it?

In addition to grace at meals, another beautiful Christian custom for the home is the evening blessing given by the father to all the children: As each child comes to give him a good-night kiss, the father lays his hand upon his head or traces a little cross upon his forehead. What an advantage for the children who see in their father a quasi-religious—as they really should be able to do. What an advantage for the father who will as a consequence be more conscious of his office. Imagine what his thoughts must be as he blesses his children in the evening if, during the day, he has done something for which his conscience reproaches him!

"We shall make our brethren Christians again," sing the Young Catholic Workers. "We shall make homes Christian again," should be the song of married Christians. To do that, they must begin with their own.

CHILDREN AND CHRISTMAS

IT IS easy to understand how enraptured children can become at the contemplation of a tiny Babe in a

manger. To have God reduce Himself to their own status, to become a child like them, to need a mother, what more could they desire! They feel on a footing with Him. The Almighty is of their stature!

We are told that on Christmas Eve, Saint John of the Cross used to carry a statue of the Infant Jesus in procession about the monastery. The procession would stop before each monk's cell asking hospitality for the Divine Babe. The cells, like the hearts of the monks, would open to faith and to love. Only then would the statue be carried to the Crib and the Divine Office begin.

Children share the simplicity of these holy monks. Nothing attracts them more than the Crib. This very attraction makes it imperative that they learn about it correctly.

Care must be taken not to mix in with the gospel mystery any details which the child will later come to recognize as false. What good can come of representing Santa Claus almost as God the Father who has given us His Son? Why let children believe that it is the Infant Jesus Himself who comes down the chimney to bring them presents . . . only to hear some day, "You know, mamma, this is the last time I'm going to believe in Little Jesus who comes down the chimney with presents."

If we mix the false with the true, it is no wonder the child will not be able to separate legend from doctrine later on. The Gospel is sufficiently extraordinary in itself without our adding any of our own creations to it. If we do, we may well fear the child will become disgusted later at being deceived and reject everything.

Any charming legend or pious little story we may want to tell them when they are very little should be kept quite distinct and handled very differently from the dogmatic truths and authentic historical facts we teach them. Let us not introduce fairies into the story of Jeanne of Arc's childhood, nor put the legend of Saint Nicholas rescuing little children on a level with the realities of the Redemption, with the facts of Our Lord's saving us from hell.

If, therefore, we are to capitalize on the child's attraction for the marvelous, let us avoid abusing his credulity; above all when dealing with the lives of the saints, with the Blessed Virgin and with Christ, let us not mix the false with the true. Let us always keep on a plane apart those truths which are to be forever the object of ineradicable belief.

There is, however, a positive suggestion to offer: Explain to the child how Baptism has made him a living Crib; not a wooden manger padded with straw, but a living Crib; not a crib where only little Jesus lives but a Crib where the Three Persons of the Holy Trinity dwell, the Three Divine Persons. Here, too, is splendid opportunity to show the child the difference between the two presences—the presence of God in the soul through grace and the presence of Jesus in the stable through the Incarnation.

EUCHARISTIC EDUCATION (1)

A FATHER wrote the following incident to a friend:

"You are acquainted with my little boy. The other day his sister who is fifteen asked him, "Bernard, what is the difference between Holy Communion and blessed bread?" That could have been a stickler for a little fellow only six-and-a-half. "Oh," he answered quickly, "they are not at all alike. Blessed bread is just bread and Holy Communion is our good Jesus." The child has never had formal catechism lessons, but he has observed about him the practice of Christian life; he has heard his mother tell him upon returning from church that she had received Holy Communion; that is all.

However the child acquired his correct ideas, it is evident that with a knowledge of this kind he is ready to make his First Holy Communion.

The Church requires the child to know the difference between the Blessed Eucharist and ordinary bread. Relative to this point the bishops of Belgium state in their "Practical Instructions" that "the child has sufficient knowledge and has met requirements if he knows according to his capacity that in the Eucharistic Bread there is the true living Body of Jesus Christ with His soul and His divinity, glorious as He is in heaven."

By way of supplementary explanation the instructions add:

"It suffices to have him know that Jesus Christ died for us upon the Cross before ascending to heaven; that He wanted to remain among us in the Host in the tabernacle; that He deigned to make Himself the food of our souls; that it is the priest who changes the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ when he pronounces the words of Consecration during Mass and that from this moment on the Host is no longer bread but it has become the living Body of Jesus Christ; that Jesus is hidden in this Host; that when one receives Holy Communion he receives God into his heart and that, therefore, he must before receiving cleanse his soul from all stain of sin."

Moreover, the Instructions further observe that in addition to the knowledge of the Eucharist as already described, the child ought to know and understand to the best of his ability:

- That he has been created by God;
- That this God, the Creator and Sovereign Master of all things is One only God; That there are Three Persons in God: the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit;
- That the second Person became Man for us, suffered and died upon the Cross to save us;
- That the person who with the grace of Jesus Christ does good by observing the law of God will be rewarded by God in heaven;

While the person who does evil by disobeying the law of God and who dies in the state of mortal sin will be deprived of the vision of God in heaven and will be punished eternally in hell.

It is important to note the stress laid upon the two phrases, according to his capacity and to the best of his ability.

The Church does not demand a profound knowledge; she requires only a knowledge proportionate to the age of the child. It is not necessary for him to know bookish formulas by heart; nor is it sufficient for him to learn by heart explanations which he recites like a parrot. The child should understand—according to his capacity, yes—but he should truly understand.

EUCHARISTIC EDUCATION (2)

BESIDES the knowledge of the truths of faith which the child should have according to his age and intelligence, the Church requires of him the desire to approach God in the Eucharist before admitting him to his First Holy Communion. Diocesan statutes state:

"It is essential that, knowing the infinite love which brings our Divine Savior to him and the desire Our Lord has to give Himself and to unite Himself with him in Holy Communion, the child should on his part desire to approach Jesus and give evidence of his veneration and his love for Him."

This sufficient devotion supposes, "The pious recitation of the prayers essential for the Christian: The Our Father, the Hail Mary, the Apostles" Creed, the Acts of Faith, Hope, Charity and of Contrition and dispositions of reverence toward the Holy Eucharist."

At what age can these conditions be realized?

Canon Law avoids setting a mathematical age. It states, "All the faithful of either sex who have attained the age of discretion, that is to say, the age of reason, ought to receive the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist at least once a year, during the Easter season, unless on the advice of his own confessor and for a reasonable cause he be justified in differing for the time being from the accomplishment of this precept." (Canon 859)

We can readily understand that because of differences in intelligence, receptivity of soul, educational environment, and the catechetical instruction obtainable the age required for First Holy Communion can vary. It is up to those charged with the spiritual care of the child to determine whether he has attained the correct age. Children attain it sooner than we might think in many cases.

If parents want to stimulate a desire for Holy Communion in their child, is it not evident that they themselves must have an ardent hunger for It? A mother who seldom receives Holy Communion will hardly be able to instill in her little ones a desire to receive Jesus. Should she none the less succeed in imparting to them a burning desire for Holy Communion, how will she then prevent their astonishment at her own lack of eagerness to communicate? What is good for the children is good for mamma, too, isn't it?

All things considered, is it not also true that what holds for the mother holds equally for the father?

Certainly there may at times be sufficiently justifiable reasons why papa and mamma cannot receive Holy Communion so often as their children and the reasons can be given to the children. However, it is well to remember that a child uses admirable logic. He will not accept as a precious treasure something which no one around him appears to appreciate.

Further there is nothing that so convinces and draws him as example.

EUCHARISTIC EDUCATION (3)

IT WOULD be a mistake to limit the Eucharistic knowledge of the child to an understanding of the Real Presence and the nature of Holy Communion.

As soon as possible and in proportion to the unfolding of his understanding, the child should be initiated into the Mystery of the Eucharistic-Sacrifice, or in other words, he should be given an intelligent appreciation of the Mass. This naturally supposes that those instructing him have complete and correct information on this vital subject— unfortunately, this is not often the case.

It is easy to explain even to relatively young children—as was evidenced in the Children's Crusade—that Our Lord did not want to limit the offering of His immolation on the Cross to a single day, to Good Friday only.

Because sins were going to continue to swarm the earth, it was fitting—although certainly in itself not necessary, but assuredly fitting—for Our Lord to repeat His elevation between earth and heaven, to put Himself as a screen—the screen of His nail-pierced Hands and open Side—between the justice of God

perpetually outraged and the sins of humanity.

Consequently, before dying, Our Lord gave to His Apostles and their successors the power to change bread and wine into His Body and Blood, the power to offer Him anew, the power in each Holy Mass to lift him up again between earth and heaven.

Since every day is marked by sin and the betrayal of Judas, by the crimes of men, by forgetfulness and ingratitude without name on the part of so many people, it is fitting, says Bossuet, that every day be a Good Friday.

Our Lord in every Mass has again in the hands of the priest the dispositions of complete sacrifice that were in His Heart at the moment of the First Eucharistic Offering and which He kept throughout His Passion and His agony on the Cross.

In this way will the Offering of His Sacrifice be perpetuated.

It is not a different immolation from the immolation of Holy Thursday at the Last Supper; it is the same. Nor is it a different immolation from the immolation on Calvary. There it was a bloody sacrifice; at the altar, in the Mass, it is an unbloody sacrifice. The form alone is different.

In order to stress the identity of the Mass and the Sacrifice of the Cross—for it is a dogma that they are one and the same sacrifice—the Church provides carefully that at every Holy Mass a great number of details recall the immolation of Jesus on Calvary.

The priest may not celebrate Mass unless there is a crucifix above the altar. The altar stone beneath the altar cloths is marked by five crosses which recall the five Wounds of Our Lord. All the objects the priest uses and the vestments he wears have reminders of the cross.

There should then not be too much difficulty for the child if he is alert to become well informed about the ineffable mystery of Christ's renewed or rather continued immolation. Then he will get the habit—and a very essential habit it is—of receiving Holy Communion not only to receive but also to give; not only to benefit by the Living Bread but to unite himself with Jesus in the very act of His perpetuated Sacrifice.

EUCHARISTIC EDUCATION (4)

SHOULD children be led further in their Eucharistic education than the phases discussed so far? That is, should they at such an early age be introduced to the subject of grace, particularly the ineffable grace given to the world through the Sacrament of the altar?

It may be advisable to wait a bit before introducing them to the subject of grace but it should be kept constantly in mind. We ought not take it upon ourselves to dispense to these little Christians only a part of Christianity.

Before we can penetrate to the depths of the Eucharistic mystery, we must understand the great doctrine of our incorporation in Christ: Our Lord, in order to restore to us the divine life which we lost by original sin, was not satisfied to redeem us from without by paying our debts with the merits of His life and sacrifice; He wanted to make us one with Him which, as I have already understood in my meditations, is the culminating point of Christianity. Our Lord in order to redivinize us made us one with Himself.

Thanks to the bloody grafting Our Divine Lord was willing to endure for love of us on Calvary, we were made capable of being joined, set and established as branches of the Living Trunk. Baptism made this sublime incorporation effective for each of us.

Since Calvary, then, we are of the body of Christ—Christ's mystical body: Jesus plus us. "I am the Vine, you are the branches."

A beautiful and strictly logical consequence follows: Just as the Divine Redeemer dying on the Cross offered Himself as Head of the whole human race, so in this pure oblation He offers not only Himself as Head of the Church to the Heavenly Father, but in Himself, His mystical members as well.

Since Calvary, Jesus is not separated from His members. A person passing through a door does not first put his head through and then fifty feet later bring through the other members of his body; he goes through as a unit at one time.

Is it so difficult to get our little Christians to understand that? Naturally, we will attempt to explain it to them only after we have made them conscious of what their baptism means to them and the splendor of their status in Christ.

We tell ourselves too easily that it is difficult and under this satisfying pretext we neglect to give the young the relish and the knowledge for their splendor which they are actually capable of enjoying.

I will teach my children as soon as possible to find in the Eucharist Christ's great plan for proving His love. "He has made us one with Him. In the act of sacrifice through the hands of the priest, whose word alone has brought Him to be present on the altar the Faithful themselves with one desire and one prayer offer to the Eternal Father the most acceptable victim of praise and propitiation for the Church's universal needs."

EUCHARISTIC EDUCATION (5)

WE OUGHT to get the children into the habit of going to Holy Communion not only to receive, although that in itself is a tremendous privilege for "Unless you eat the Flesh of the Son of Man you shall not have life in you" but most of all to give. We have considered this point before, but it is worthy of much thought.

How can we expect to enter into a true union with One who is both the Immolation and the Immolated if we do not strive to nourish the spirit of sacrifice in the very depths of our being? To join together two beings one of whom is in the state of sacrifice and the other not, one who is imbued with the spirit of generosity and immolation and one who is not would be but a juxtaposition of two totally different beings. Is that union?

The spirit of sacrifice then is the prime disposition we should foster in ourselves if we wish to profit the most from the Eucharist. The priest at the Offertory puts a few drops of water into the chalice. We must pour our whole selves into the chalice to be offered.

The desire to give much more than the desire to receive should move us. To offer our generosity; to understand the call to sacrifice, to a united sacrifice, that is the Eucharistic spirit.

If only we could inspire all our religious practices and activities with this disposition which means so much to us when we are participating in the highest act of worship possible, the Holy Sacrifice of the

Mass.

For how many is their whole life of prayer only their prayers of petition! They are in difficulty, they need something and they hold out their hand, "Lord, give me...." Such a prayer is not forbidden, but that is not all there is to prayer.

"Prayer," says the Catechism, "is the raising up of our minds and hearts to God...." Why? In order to adore Him, to thank Him, to beg His pardon and to implore His graces.

The petition for graces comes last in the order of prayers. First and foremost is the prayer of adoration, it is our homage ascending to God. It is toward Him and not toward ourselves that our souls are to be directed in prayer. "I praise You, O God, for Your great glory." That is the fundamental sentiment of the Gloria in Excelsis. "My soul doth magnify the Lord" is Mary's exultant prayer, the Magnificat.

In the prayer of Thanksgiving, there is some thought of ourselves but we are secondary. We pray because we have received a gift from God. We thank Him for His beneficence. This kind of prayer could be much more frequent! There are so many who are in the habit of receiving without ever so much as a "Thank You."

In the prayer for pardon, he who prays is surely present in his prayer; he has sinned; it is of himself he speaks. The prayer is excellent just the same, but it is only third in order of excellence.

How much prayer would there be left in the lives of most Christians if their prayers of petition were omitted from their worship of God?

How do I stand in this matter of prayer? Is it my principal effort to interest God in my affairs rather than to interest myself in Him?

I ought to broaden my concept of worship. I will teach my children to petition, to implore, to thank, but above all I will teach them to adore.

TRAINING TO PURITY (1)

THE child is naturally innocent. Moreover, if baptized, it possesses with infused faith a special quality of innocence which comes to it from the presence of the Holy Spirit in its soul.

We must avoid any diminishing of this innocence. It is a great mistake to think that because the child is innocent, "it doesn't understand," and consequently to take no precautions; to be lacking in vigilance over the child's bathing and dressing, to let it run about without clothes, unsupervised before its brothers and sisters.

The adults of the family, too, should avoid any immodesty either in posture or dress before the little one; they should keep out of its way pictures of questionable decency. True, at the time, the harm may be slight or even negative, but the child has eyes and a memory; it registers everything, stores it all away.

Only when the child is still a baby should it be allowed to stay in bed after it is awake. Great care should be exercised for bodily cleanliness to prevent the formation of bad habits that might result from discomfort. It is best to separate the sexes for sleep and to give the children a bed that is not too soft.

As the children grow older, we must be vigilant over their choice of playmates. We should protect them from any pictures, statues, advertisements or entertainment that can disturb them. We are wise if we

keep the children busy even to the point of fatigue, but a fatigue in keeping with their age and strength. Never should we praise children for their beauty, especially little girls. We ought also to inspire them to absolute confidence. In addition we must seize every opportunity to show them positively the grandeur of purity.

People sometimes attempt to rear children as if they were without sex. Children are either little boys or little girls. Long before the awakening of their sex instincts, in fact from their babyhood, their personality is distinctly individual and gives foreshadowings of fatherhood or of motherhood. Sex, although its characteristic functions do not become active until the onset of puberty, impregnates the whole physical and moral being from the beginning. Consequently, it is important to foresee long in advance the unfolding of that providential power which is still dormant yet capable of being influenced beneficially or detrimentally at this early stage according to the wisdom of the folly of its training.

It would be well, then, to heed the strong injunctions of a one-time educator: "We must never forget that certain organs of the child which still serve him only in the processes of elimination will become for him during adolescence the seat of the powerful passion of the flesh and that then certain acts, looks, attitudes which now may be only vulgar or immodest can easily be after the awakening of sexual urges impure and perverse. Further, such acts and attitudes can arouse unhealthy and troublesome sexual excitation prematurely and during the crisis of adolescence turn spontaneously into the development of a vice which seems to be rooted in the soul from its budding forth so truly is habit second nature; and habit is difficult to break even in early childhood."

We should not, however, be satisfied with a purely negative training to holy purity, a training made up for the most part of wise precautions. There is need, too, for positive training in this beautiful virtue. This positive training will in part consist of education in true facts, a discreet and chaste explanation of the functions of the generative organs according to God's plan; an explanation as complete as the age of the child permits or requires. The duty of giving this instruction falls largely upon the mother who only too often finds herself inadequately prepared.

TRAINING TO PURITY (2)

IT IS a fact that even very young children become curious about the difference of the sexes as well as the mystery of generation and they express their curiosity with embarrassing candor and directness in blunt questions: "Where do babies come from?"

In general, no one is better qualified than the mother to give the initial instructions and information delicately, without wounding innocence or troubling and shocking the child's keenly susceptible soul by confronting it too brusquely with disturbing new concepts. It is better for the father to instruct the boys. Parents have the grace of state; furthermore, they know or they ought to know how to speak to their children and exactly what to say according to what the child already knows or does not know, according to its impressionability, it's probable emotional reaction, its intelligence, its imagination.

The initial instruction must always be strictly individual, never group instruction.

Such instruction should be given early enough, in time, but never prematurely. Rarely should a mass of information be given at once, but nearly always imparted progressively. One must never give any false information, but neither is one obliged to tell all there is to be told at one blow. Only such knowledge should be given as is necessary to clarify the present difficulty, to satisfy the child's curiosity at the time.

Later when occasion offers to complete the information, it can be completed.

The introduction of the child to the facts of life must be made with simplicity, without excessive preambles and beating about the bush, objectively without clumsiness; they must be presented as something quite natural but explained in an atmosphere of earnestness, dignity and respect. There must be nothing affected or borrowed in one's manner or tone, only calmness and a natural everyday voice uncolored by emotionalism. The child, however, must be made to realize that he has been given no new subject for chatter with his playmates and friends; if there is something he wishes to speak of later regarding his new information or if there is something he does not understand, he will always be able to ask mother or father about it; he should speak to them about it.

A very sensible mother concluded the instructions she gave her little one with these few words: "What I have just told you is a secret, our secret. Now that you know it, give me your hand and promise me that you will not question other people about it or ever speak to anyone else about it, but only to me."

A little child will be flattered by such a mark of confidence and being naturally pure will sense the reason for this recommendation as clearly as if it had been expressed.

In addition, if the child is used to living in an atmosphere of filial trust and abandonment, of respect for itself, of training in sacrifice, supernatural generosity, daily contact with the invisible world through prayer and love of God, its instruction will prove singularly easy.

We cannot overemphasize the fact that "training to purity must be set in the framework of a solid all-round training of the will, the conscience, the emotions, the imagination and the whole body." To enlighten the child regarding sex will serve for nothing and can even be harmful if it has not first been established in fidelity in the light of spirituality, and in energy of will.

In other words, formal training to purity must be preceded by training pure and simple. It will be possible to speak clearly to a child who lives in an environment that is deeply impregnated with Christianity. In his tranquil soul, innocent and disciplined as it is, useful initiations can take place with profit and without causing any trouble; his delicate conscience will understand; his refined and mortified emotions will yield readily to the requirements of modesty, and he will not be stimulated to an unhealthy curiosity.

TRAINING TO PURITY (3)

SATISFYING the child s legitimate curiosity is not of itself a sufficient antidote against evil; the nascent passions aiding a precocious corruption in which the mind could effect a premature awakening of troubling instincts could very easily be the starting point of impure habits. It is essential that with or preferably before we enlighten the child's mind on sex, we inspire him with a love for moral beauty and develop in him a generous will.

When we have done this, how should we proceed in teaching the child the mystery of life?

There are two aspects to the lesson: to explain the role of the mother in generation which is relatively easy; to explain the role of the father which is more delicate and which should consequently be given much later.

For the explanation of the first phase of this lesson there is no better starting point than the Hail Mary,

“Blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.”

“How beautiful it is,” said little Guy de Fontgalland to his father one day, “how beautiful it is that little Jesus, wishing to come to earth like us, hid Himself for nine months within His mother, in His mother’s womb! How beautiful it is! I learned that today when I said the Hail Mary; I understood it. How little Jesus must love us to do that for us!”

In “Formation de la chastete” by Ernst, we read an example of how easily and simply a mother went about the instruction of her child. “Where do babies come from?” queried her seven-year-old son. She answered with a story:

“Your father and mother love each other very much. Therefore, they wanted a child with all their hearts. You know that little children come from God: He created the first man and gave all people life. But when He wanted to make another man, He made use of parents and He put love into their heart. He makes the little baby grow from a tiny little seed which he leaves hidden for almost a year in a dark little hiding place. You know flowers, plants and even big trees come also from little seeds. (It is good to call children’s attention to that fact very early as it makes a good background.) Now each grain must first of all remain for some time in the dark earth. The seed of the child has been placed by God’s plan in the womb of the mother; that is its hiding place. That is where you, too, remained quite near my heart and God made your body and soul. How? No one really knows but God Himself. You grew until you were big enough to be taken in my arms.

“Even though the mother suffers great pain and may be in danger of losing her life when the baby comes into the world, she is glad to bear it all for love of her little one. Besides her joy is greater than her pain. Parents thank God for His gift and promise Him to take good care of the child and rear it well.”

There will be no difficulty if these instructions are given before puberty when the opportunity arises.

The need to give the facts about the father’s part in the marital act is much less pressing. Such details can be given when adolescent boys or girls ask specific questions on this point revealing that the problem is uppermost in their mind or when lack of knowledge if delayed would cause them troubles of mind or soul; even when the subject is not on their mind or causing them any difficulty, it may still seem advisable to instruct them by way of preparation for life, as for example, before they go away to school or enlist for military service, or take a vacation job or any similar occasion. How much better a revelation made with delicacy and love than a brutal shock to conscience through conversations, reading or impure pictures!

After giving the necessary details about the physiological aspect of marriage, parents should never fail to lead their child’s mind as quickly as possible to a consideration of the glorious purpose of generation—a participation in the creative power of God.

TRAINING TO PURITY (4)

EVEN though there may be cases where it seems advisable to give all the necessary explanations in a single sitting, in general it is better to spread the lessons over a well-spaced period of time and to grade them according to the development of the child, its suspected temptations, and its needs of soul.

Wise are parents and educators who show concern for the child, foresee its needs, guess its worries, answer prudently and discreetly its silent or expressed questioning. They need much self-sacrifice and

intelligence; but it is their role in life--the most beautiful part of their role.

After impressing the child with the fact that everything in the mystery of the origin of life is sacred, divine—the union of the parents, the generation of the child, which gives another elect soul to God and another member to the Mystical Body— is there any need to call attention to the gravity of the desecrations that the perversity of men perpetrate against it?

Certainly such an idea should not be a starting point in our explanations; the child's first ideas about the origin of life must not be mingled with the concept of sin. The idea of, magnificent grandeur should dominate. Later on, at an opportune time and as the need arises, we can explain how contrary to God's plan it is to interfere in any way with the generation of life whether through selfishness or fear of suffering; we can point out how God has surrounded the use of the reproductive organs with special protections; we ought to emphasize the safeguarding character of modesty and call attention to the tremendous thought of God's divine presence within us, making respect for our bodies imperative since they are living temples of the Holy Spirit. We will tell them, too, that God punishes severely the wicked use of the creative power He has entrusted to His creatures, spiritually by loss of grace and by hell and often corporally by disease.

What we must avoid above all is to give the children a sort of obsession in regard to these matters. It is much better to divert their attention from this subject than to concentrate it there. One writer aptly says, "The best sex education is the kind in which sex holds the least place possible." Another, "The sacred work of nature must be enveloped by the triple veil of modesty, silence, and obscurity."

We must say enough to enlighten the child, to silence his curiosity, but refrain from saying more than necessary which would excite further curiosity and trouble. We should approach the instruction from its noblest side so that the thought of the mystery of life will always be linked with the thought of divine splendor. We need to pray much so that the child by means of our efforts and despite dangers from within and without will remain faithful in purity always, faithful to the grace of his baptism; constant in living by the light of faith. That means we cannot limit ourselves to purely natural explanations but must steep our teaching in dogma— the divine life of the Christian, his incorporation in Christ.

From these religious principles we can show that it is not enough to have a beautiful ideal; we must live out this ideal, an ideal that is both human and Christian. The necessity of Confession, direction, and frequent Holy Communion, in achieving the ideal ought to be stressed.

It is primarily in this endeavor that the words of Our Lord have special significance: "Without Me you can do nothing." And again, "The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak." It is folly to expose oneself to temptation and wise to moderate one's love of comfort and pleasure, to learn how to conquer oneself. Better still is it to learn how to spend oneself in the service of others. Nothing is a better protection against failings in self than the gift of self to others. The first beneficiary of the apostolate is the apostle himself. We ought to encourage youth to join in one or other of the special Catholic Action groups of the Apostolate such as a C. Y. O. group, a Sodality, or Catholic scout work. It will help discipline the body while training the soul.

READING

LAMARTINE's mother wrote in her diary on June 19, 1801, "I was thinking again today about the danger of light reading. I believe that I would do well to refrain altogether from it; it would be a sacrifice

at first, a sacrifice that would certainly please God since such reading is one of the most dangerous pleasures in the world. Besides, when I am taken up with this distracting kind of reading, serious and useful reading wearies and bores me; yet, I certainly need it to become capable of instructing my children. For their sakes I have finally decided to deprive myself of the pleasures of frivolous reading."

Parents should exercise care in their own reading. They, too, must avoid all that could sully their souls and rob them of virtue. They can go even further and like Lamartine's mother give up reading that consumes the precious time which could be spent in useful reading. One needs to know so many things to rear children! Making due allowance for needful and useful distractions, one ought always to choose reading matter that will enrich the mind and foster the qualities needed for the delicate ministry of parenthood.

What good fortune to be helped in advance by one's children:

"For their sakes, I am finally decided to deprive myself of the pleasure of frivolous reading."

But the parents" reading is not the only problem. There is another, the children's reading. What great imprudence is evident in many families where all sorts of reviews, magazines, newspapers, and books definitely unfit for children are left lying about in their way; where unwise freedom of the library is granted and children can ferret out books that are often harmful to their morals and Christian convictions.

Jean Jacques Rousseau's story is well known. Born a Calvinist of parents who could scarcely be called commendable, he met with nothing but disturbing examples in his early childhood; however, he manifested a singular purity in resisting all interior and exterior temptations to corruption. He became a Catholic later and felt himself drawn to the priesthood. But his superiors decided at the end of a few weeks that he definitely did not have the makings of a good priest in him.

A short time after he left the seminary he was perverted morally by his benefactor, Madame de Warrens, who by most culpable relations shamefully debased the youth she called "Little one" despite her claim of wanting to act as "Mother" to him.

Awakening to a realization of his condition, Rousseau wrote in 1738, "O my God, pardon the sins I have committed up to this day, all the evils into which I have fallen.... Accept my repentance, O God, ...I will remember that You are the witness of all my actions.... I will be indulgent toward others, severe toward myself; I will resist temptations; I will live purely.... O my sovereign Master, I will spend my life in serving You."

But unfortunately a library was opened to him and he "perused books with a sort of frenzy," with no direction, no discernment. He fell under the influence of Diderot, and became a recruit for the Encyclopedists.

We know the rest. His story should incite us to serious thought. On what does the orientation of a life depend? An unlocked door, momentary forgetfulness, negligence—and a soul is perverted forever!

The conclusion is evident: Never to have bad books in the house. What good comes of them?

If for purposes of study or other reasons, books which might prove dangerous for the rest of the family are absolutely essential, they must always be kept in a locked place. Children are curious, so too are the help. Harm is quickly done!

TRAINING OF THE EMOTIONS

MANY parents are too soft in the training of their children. In order not to pain their offspring, they give in to their every whim. If the little one wants to be kissed, it is kissed; more often than not its desire for the kiss is anticipated by the parents to satisfy a desire of their own and to shower upon the little one proofs of an exaggerated tenderness. Should the child want a piece of candy, an object to examine, the parents rush to give it; they give him everything he wants or they think he wants.

What is the result? A child incapable of self denial; a child who seeks only one thing, the satisfaction of his little cravings. What a great danger for later life!

Father Viollet, director of the Association of Catholic Mothers, speaking at its convention in 1929 said, "Consider a mother who has obeyed all the corporal whims of her child; she has in so doing prepared for all the child's future falls. The little one lives as it were only by the senses of taste and touch. If a mother satisfies every sensual desire of the child in the delight of the palate and bodily comforts, she unconsciously makes it a slave of its desires; are we not correct then in saying that she herself has paved the way for the child's powerlessness later to control its sexual life?

"When sex urges appear, it is only a matter of a change of place for the sense cravings: The desires that in the child were but the hankerings of its palate will spread at the age of puberty to the other parts of the body. If the child has not been accustomed from little on to control his sense of taste and touch, how do we suppose he can escape becoming the slave of sexual sensuality? This is a point that cannot be overlooked."

Some parents are too demonstrative toward their children. Of course, there is no question of forbidding all marks of affection so natural on the part of the parents for their children and the children for their parents; that too would be an extreme. It is simply a matter of moderating tender caresses, of keeping them in their proper measure, well-ordered.

Just as it is essential for children to be reared in an atmosphere of joyous confidence, loving simplicity, harmonious companionship penetrated through and through with mutual love, so too it is essential to avoid excess in demonstrations of affection, endearing expressions, caresses and fondling. Excess in this just as excess in any other respect is a defect. It is easy to fall into such excess. Canon Dermine, a very understanding man, made this comment:

"Parents, older brothers and sisters, maids, governesses, friends of the family are inclined by the attraction of their own feelings to shower babies with hugs and kisses. These immoderate manifestations, although they have nothing indecent about them, are not without danger, for they nourish in the child a need for tenderness and a sort of sensuality which can easily become a predisposition for the awakening of the passions. Here moderation should be the rule."

The training of the children begins in the training of the parents. They ought to moderate their own feelings if they do not want their children to give evidence later of some dangerously exacting needs. There is one kind of glutton who stuffs himself with food and sweets; there is another who is consumed by a need for caresses.

Let us be moderate ourselves on these points so that we can teach the children to be moderate. Training is built on wise and intelligent moderation.

THE CHILD AND LAZINESS

IT HAS been said that a great difficulty in child-training is to know when to caress and when to whip.

While it is true that many of the child's faults arise from his physical condition, we should not exaggerate that fact; however, until we have proved that the fault is not the result of a physical state, an embrace is of more value than a whipping.

But here is a child whose faults are moral not physical, nor is there a psychological difficulty involved; he is sensual, he lies and he steals. There is nothing for it but to use restraints and punishments, without, however, neglecting wholesome encouragement at any manifestation of good will.

This is all very simple in theory, but the practical application of it is not always easy especially when the fault in question happens to be laziness. When a normally intelligent child dawdles at his work; when in spite of all efforts to stimulate him with high motives of courage, hope of reward and similar attractions, he persists in his inertia, chances are that he has something physically wrong with him or he is suffering from poor hygienic conditions. There was, for example, the little boy who appeared to be disgustingly lazy. One day, however, an attack of appendicitis made an operation imperative for him. Six months later, the child was at the head of his class.

Another child was in a classroom that was overcrowded and the atmosphere was so vitiated that he had difficulty breathing. He was sent to the country and immediately his work habits improved.

Whipping in either of these two cases would have been no help in curing the laziness of the children; all that was necessary was to make conditions favorable for work.

But there are truly lazy children; theirs is a moral laziness:

They won't work at all because they don't have the least bit of energy. The Catechism defines laziness as "an excessive love of rest which makes one avoid every painful duty." That is exactly what it is.

Now people who work do so either through a taste for it, through self-respect or because of duty. The problem, then, with the really lazy child is to try to stimulate in him a liking for work or awaken in him a legitimate self-respect or develop in him a sense of duty.

STIMULATE A LIKING FOR WORK: Sometimes children dislike school work especially because their beginning lessons in a subject were poorly taught. The child was repulsed by initial difficulties. That is often the case in mathematics.

"My son is getting along all right," a mother explained, "but he is a little weak in Greek." The fact was that the elements of that language had been badly explained to him. A clever professor took him in hand and showed him that Greek was easier than Latin once the first difficulties of the alphabet, the declensions, and the conjugations had been conquered. The boy won a first in Greek.

AWAKEN A LEGITIMATE SELF-RESPECT: Some children prefer rest and comfort to all else. The last place bothers them very little. They seem to have no ambition; they are utterly indifferent to success. We need not fear to humiliate them but we must be vigilant not to discourage them. The dunce cap worn too often frequently produces a real dunce. We must be ingenious to find a way to make that pupil succeed in something at least once. This could be a good starting point; then, if nothing comes of it, punishment should follow. We are, it must be remembered, considering the case of a child who does not succeed, not because he lacks the means, but because he does not work.

DEVELOP A SENSE OF DUTY: "You ought to work because papa and mamma wish it and God asks it." Bring into play a filial spirit and love of God.

Parents must know correct child psychology. They are the ones who have given him his physiological being. It is up to them to examine whether anything in his physical condition explains his inertia at work; they are in a better position than anyone else to determine this. If the deficiency is psychological, they have the responsibility for seeking into its cause and supplying the appropriate remedy. It is up to them, without substituting their own activity for the child's to teach him how to will by stimulating his will.

LAZY CHILDREN

CHILDREN who do not work or who work badly are of several types. There are sickly children: Here the remedy is up to the doctor.

There are poorly endowed children: They are not exactly ill; people can be in splendid health without being very intelligent. Some children have little talent. Rare are the parents who have the courage to recognize it; they are ashamed, and wrongly so, of the weak instrument their offspring has received. They ought to pity the child whose mind is less keen as they pity the child who is crippled or in weak health. Besides with patience they can sometimes achieve excellent results.

Then there are children who are badly trained by their parents or poorly taught by their teachers. They have been allowed to acquire habits of disorder and caprice or they have been roughly treated, overwhelmed with tasks beyond their ability to the point of being crushed by their work; they have been taught neither discipline nor a good method of work. In their case poor pedagogy is to blame. Finally, there are the actually lazy children: They are sufficiently endowed, sufficiently healthy to do normal work, but they refuse to apply themselves, go at their work grudgingly and seek to do the least possible amount of work.

Such evil is frequently traceable to an early childhood marked by too soft a training, an inadequate training in effort and endurance. The child did not start early enough to use profitably the opportunities to exercise liberty, to assume responsibility and to attack work. The parents acted for him instead of trying to form him. They lacked skill in transforming play into work and work into play. They gave him toys which offered him no chance to use his intelligence, his constructive bent, his imagination and creative powers. And whenever they held out the prospect of school life to him they led him to regard it as a task or punishment: "If you are not good at home we will send you to school soon," instead of "If you are good, we shall be able to send you to school and you will have the joy of beginning to work."

The child who is poorly trained will get accustomed to cutting his life up into two parts: the principal part belongs to pleasure with the other part thrown in from time to time— those boring moments assigned to work. He should have been impressed with the idea that work is the law of our whole life; it is the unfolding and the extension of our powers and if it brings with it a certain amount of labor, it also brings with it a greater amount of joy which results from overcoming difficulties, acquiring new knowledge and opening up additional possibilities for advancing farther into the field of truth. Recreations, games are but opportunities to relax and to stretch out into the open as it were to grasp new strength for further work.

Work should be presented not as a drudgery but as a conquest. Very early in life the child should be led

to envision his future career or mission. One could say, “If you want to become an engineer, a sailor, then....” or “You will be a mother maybe and you will have to keep house.” They should see that papa and mamma find pleasure in work and better still that work pleases God. We must all of us sanctify ourselves in the duty of our state at each moment whether we like it or not. If we like it, so much the better. If we do not like it, then we ought to put greater generosity into it and offer our suffering for a worthy cause, such as the missions, the sanctification of priests and religious, one’s family and many similar good intentions.

Care should be taken not to overdo the reward idea, especially rewards promised as a prize for work requested; that develops calculating hearts. Ask for work for the reasons previously indicated and wait for an opportunity to give an appropriate recompense on some other occasion; it will be so much more a prize since it will be unexpected.

TRAINING IN SINCERITY (1)

THE CHILD is exposed to two sorts of lies:

- The lie of which he himself is the victim.
- The lie of which he makes others the victim.

The child has an imagination that never ceases its activity. His first contacts with the world have been with dream powers; he knows nothing yet of reality being much too little to grasp it; he makes a world for himself, a world in which he is king and lord. Even later when he does begin to get in touch with reality, he will use it only as a springboard to project himself into the stars. Dream and reality overlap in his little head without harming each other; they merely embellish each other and he will not be able to recognize the line of separation. That accounts for so much fantasy in his conversation and the astonishing liberty he takes with what we adults hold as true.

Weighed by our standards, it is clearly evident that the child’s stories sound to us like downright inventions. He himself will be taken in by his own game. He will distort with delight, improvise the strangest scenes without shame. Will he always be able to distinguish whether he is the dupe of his imagination or not? Whether he is sincere or not? He is a wonderful builder of castles in the air and he will often endeavor to persuade those about him with the solidity of his edifices. Shall we call him a liar? Certainly not, rather an actor, an artist, a poet.

Parents and educators know well how advantageously they can utilize this power of recall and creation that children have. Consequently, they know no better way to amuse them and keep them quiet than to tell them stories— stories that are entirely fictitious, tales of magic, picturesque legends in which ghosts, fairies or devils play enchanting roles.

Let us not carry water too generously to the fountain. Yes, certainly, we can tell the little ones charming stories but with moderation. Make the children want them; however, avoid killing their effect by telling too many in close sequence. Children must be able to think over the stories, mediate on them, and through them discover life as it is. If the stories resemble each other or follow in too close succession, the child’s imagination will jumble everything; the profit is considerably lessened.

One precaution is vital: The stories, which will surely always be very appealing and not without some suggestion of complication and mystery, must definitely present virtue in a beautiful light; otherwise, the

child will be occupied, entertained and kept interested but he will not be educated or inspired. Since he is possessed of uncompromising logic he will be quick to draw dangerous conclusions if he sees vice rewarded; and the unpleasant results may not be slight. From this standpoint some puppet shows are not so innocent as they appear. We must not be pharisaical but we must know how to foresee danger. With children everything is important.

Even one or the other of La Fontaine's fables have questionable merit for children. Fortunately, with these fables, the children are much more interested in the activities of the characters than in the moral demonstrated. As one child put it: "Fables are entertaining; it is a pity though that there must always be a tiresome closing at the end." He was referring to the final two or three lines, the author's moral tag, which pointed out the lesson to be taught.

Let us not forget that the most beautiful stories are not made-up stories, but stories that really happened. "Did that really happen, mamma?" What a joy to be able to answer yes to that question. Why not take the bulk of our stories, if not exclusively at least mostly, from the lives of the saints, from the Gospel stories? Where can anything more wonderful, more truly wonderful, and at the same time more authentic, be found?

TRAINING IN SINCERITY (2)

THERE is another kind of lie possible for the child, one that has moral significance, and that is the lie told with the actual intention of deceiving.

He may categorically deny his guilt when accused of a fault he has actually committed, or he may invent falsehoods through vanity. In the first instance he is seeking to exonerate himself; in the second, to make himself more important.

Often the reason the child tells the first kind of lie is that the punishment he gets for his little pranks and misdemeanors is out of all proportion to his offense. So many parents punish under the influence of anger that cruel words, exaggerated expressions and sometimes mean acts escape them. The child unable to resist by strength seeks to escape by deceit.

Sometimes the child lies for the sole satisfaction of excusing himself; not to mention the case, which is not at all fantastic, where the child lies for the sake of lying through an unhealthy tendency which is fortunately rare. In cases of this kind, the little offender must be shown how ugly such a fault is, how unworthy of him and how saddening for his parents.

Wise indeed was the mother who used the following technique on her four-year-old daughter the first time she tried to deceive her.

"My little girl has lied to me. This is the first time that anyone has lied in this house; therefore my little one may not have any dessert today because she deserves to be punished and mamma will not eat either because she will not be able to; she feels too sad."

Even when children are older such a method is good. A certain colonel had entrusted his sixteen-year-old son with the honor of keeping the flag of his regiment in his room; he took the privilege away from him as a punishment for a small lie.

The following counsel ought to be adopted as principles of conduct by those who want to inculcate an

appreciation of sincerity in their children:

To create and to maintain an atmosphere of loyalty, uprightness, and utter truth in the home; to instill a horror of sham, pretense, playing-up through policy; to encourage simplicity in everything; to take it for granted that no one will seek to pass for what he is not; that if one has done wrong he will admit it; to refrain from upbraiding; and to tolerate no tattling; and to praise another for his truthfulness particularly if it cost him something.

- Never set an example of lying or give any encouragement to lying. No bluff: "When the teacher asks you if you did your homework all alone say yes." None of that!
- Never give a child the impression that we believe him to be a liar, but rather manifest confidence in him. That will encourage him to be truthful and develop his self-respect.
- Never demand any immediate avowal of faults in the presence of others.
- Never laugh at any clever little lie told by the child to get out of facing up to a mistake or fault.
- Never lose an opportunity of praising for honesty and reproving for duplicity.

The last and most important of all advice is to inculcate in the child the sense of the Divine Presence. Help him realize that God is everywhere, as the proverb puts it, "God sees a black ant on the blackest marble in the blackest night." Above all, help him to understand that God dwells in the depths of his baptized soul. "You are a living ciborium. You can deceive your parents, your playmates, and your friends. God accompanies you everywhere: Be firm out of respect for the divine Guest who does not leave you."

TRAINING IN SINCERITY (3)

THE best way to encourage a child to be truthful at all times is to use strong positive appeals.

- **APPEAL TO PERSONAL DIGNITY AND PRIDE:** General de Lamoriciere used to say, "I shall die without ever having told a lie." And little Guy de Fontgalland, "I have never lied; I have too great a horror of untruth."

  Beneath the doorway of the Church of Santa Maria in Cosmedin, at Rome there is an immense slab of antique marble on which is drawn a face with a wide open mouth—The Mouth of Truth, La bocca della verita. Legend has it that it closes mercilessly on the fingers of liars. The biographer of the Empress Zita relates that when she was a little girl she used to plunge her fingers into the bocca positive of withdrawing them intact because as she explained, "I have never lied." Is not the reproach, "you are a liar" one of the most devastating?

- **APPEAL TO COURAGE:** The story of George Washington and the cherry tree is a classic. We all know it. The father appreciated his son's courage and praised him with the words: "Your honesty is worth more than the most beautiful cherry tree."

  According to Corneille, to be honest is to be a gentleman:

  He who calls himself a gentleman and lies as you do Lies when he says it, and will never be one. Is there vice more vile, is there stain more black More unworthy of a man . . .

- **APPEAL TO LOVE FOR PEACE:** Corneille wrote his play "The Liar" to show that he who deceives others is not happy. Once he has entangled himself in the web of deceit and dissimulation, he needs a

good memory for all the tales he has invented. What if he were to give himself away, reveal his deceit? That must be a constant worry.

How truly psychological was the answer of the individual who responded to the question, “Are you really telling the truth” with the statement, “I never lie; I am too busy; lying would befuddle me too much, get me too involved.”

Truthfulness is further a guarantee of success. Sincerity is the best policy; we mistrust one who is known as a sly fellow, a dissembler, without integrity. We are not wary of an upright person. To be honest is the best way to be clever.

In general, a frank admission of guilt disarms. Madame Acarie, an outstanding Christian of the seventeenth century often said to her children, “Even if you would turn the whole house topsy-turvy and destroy it, but admit it when questioned, I should pardon you; however, I will never pardon you the smallest lie. Even if you were as tall as the ceiling I would get some women to help me hold you rather than allow a lie to slip by without punishment; nor would the whole world together succeed in getting me to pardon you.”

The conclusion is evident. I will strive to give my children the Gospel principle, “Let your words be yea, yea; nay, nay.”

The example of that upright soldier General de Maudhuy could well be an inspiration for me; he composed the following soldier-prayer for his boys, “My lord, Saint Louis, Sir Bertrand du Guselin et Sir Bayard obtain for me the grace to be brave like you and never to lie either to myself or to others.”

HONESTY AND TACT

TO TEACH children to be honest and at the same time to develop in them a feeling for the requirements of tact so that they learn to keep to themselves opinions that might wound or embarrass others is a delicate undertaking.

While a child may occasionally be given to lying, he is, unless perverted, much more inclined to speak the truth. He will blurt it out regardless of place or circumstances. Has he not often won for himself the epithet terrible for no other reason than his disconcerting honesty?

“Godfather, are you going to stay a long time this evening?”

“Oh, just about the usual time. Why?”

“Because, Mamma says there’s just no way of getting you to leave.”

It is necessary but not easy to make the child appreciate where sincerity ends and indiscretion begins; to teach him, without dulling the luster of his honesty, that it is not always good to say everything just because it is true and that politeness and even charity require us to practice self-restraint and not give free rein to the expression of all feelings.

In his play “The Misanthrope,” Moliere gave us the character of Alceste who on the plea of honesty flung the unpleasant truth about others into their very face. He succeeded not in converting them but in bringing shame upon himself and wounding seriously the self-respect of those he insulted with his intemperate frankness.

Always to mean what one says is not the same as saying all one thinks or all one knows.

Human beings are called to live together in society and there can be cases where social life requires that words, those external symbols of thought and feeling, be used outside of strict material meaning or even contrary to it. We should not call such statements lies or we will create a disturbing confusion in the mind of the child who must be thoroughly convinced that a lie is never justifiable.

Much of the difficulty will be cleared away if we make the child understand that the purpose of speech is not only to express the truth but also to foster life in common. We must insist that lying is absolutely forbidden but likewise explain that to defend one's secrets against the curious, one's purse against thieves is a legitimate act which need not involve a lie.

Catholic morality is the morality of truth and honesty; but being human and social, it is also the morality of prudence, of justice and of charity.

IS SELF-ACCUSATION OBLIGATORY?

WE HAVE seen the difficulty and the necessity of giving the child a correct notion of the consideration due to politeness and charity in the true spirit of sincerity.

There is yet another difficulty. Many do not sufficiently distinguish the exact limits of sincerity or rather the degree of obligation to speak the entire truth.

There is no obligation to speak the entire truth to one who has no right to know it. We can use words in their usually accepted meanings: we can allow circumstances to modify the meanings of words: we can allow the hearer to deceive himself.

Saint Thomas a Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury, had to flee from the anger of Henry II, the King of England. He was pursued by the king's emissaries. As he rode along on a horse with neither bridle nor saddle he was stopped by armed men.

"Are you possibly the Archbishop of Canterbury?"

"Well, my friends," he answered, "look and judge for yourselves whether or not this is the equipage of an Archbishop."

"Deceit and sharp practice!" some will protest. Not at all. Simply a clear knowledge of the exact extent of the duty of truthfulness.

Take a case more directly concerned with education. Here let us presume that those who question have a right to the truth, the parents for example. There is even in this case a principle intervening which does not allow them to push their right to know the truth by demanding an avowal of guilt.

And this principle which all moral theologians recognize and which is founded on great wisdom is that no one is obliged to accuse himself. It is up to the accusers to prove the guilt and to punish accordingly if the guilt is proved. If the culprit does admit guilt it should be a reason for lessening the punishment. But to make self-denunciation a necessity is excessive.

Consider the case of a little child suspected of a fault. "Did you do that?" he is asked. According to correct morality, he cannot be forced to accuse himself. If the child says the whole truth, perfect! He is not obliged to. When he does, he is generous, doing more than he must; he has a right then to marked leniency. "A fault confessed is half pardoned." But one oversteps his power by commanding him to hide

nothing, by telling him that he sins if he does not accuse himself. He does the better thing in accusing himself but commits no fault in not accusing himself; he is guilty of an imperfection but no sin.

Certainly it is better to accustom the child to admit the truth at all times, but to make it a formal duty in every case is to urge the law beyond reason and to confound a generous attitude with an obligatory attitude. One of the most essential points in the formation of the child's conscience is to teach him to discern what is commanded from what is simply though earnestly counseled.

TRAINING TO CONFIDENCE

CONFIDENCE is necessary. Nothing is so sad as those chasms that divide parents and children, causing them to lead lives practically isolated from each other, with no contact of soul, no intimacy between them.

Difficult moments will come, temptations will arise, decisions will have to be made and action determined. If children have no confidence in their parents, to what dangers they will be exposed!

But this confidence is difficult to get.

One important reason for the difficulty arises from the physical or moral temperament of the parents and of the children. The parents must know how to vanquish their little ones' fears, consent to their advances and not be afraid to give in.

Sometimes this confidence is blocked by other reasons which parents only too often overlook. There are for example parents who, because they are not sufficiently supernatural, openly show more affection for one child than another or give fewer marks of affection to one child. The child who believes himself slighted may turn inward and become sullen and jealous.

Again there are parents who are unbalanced in their punishments or fail to be just. There are others who are woefully ignorant of psychology and as a consequence seriously wound the self-respect of a child. He retaliates by closing up his heart.

A mother once laughed at a candid confidence her little boy revealed to her.

He was hurt.

"Papa," he said, "I don't love mamma anymore."

"What's that! Is it possible? Why not?"

"Why? . . . Well, that's just how it is. I don't want to tell her anything anymore . . . never anymore." The father tried in vain to reason with him but he remained obstinate.

"No, that's the end. I don't love mamma anymore!"

It may have been mere caprice and doubtless it was; time would probably clear it up. Yet, who knows?

Like all fragile things, the child's heart is easily scarred. And as with all things that have been marred it is not easy to restore the luster, to efface all the blemishes.

Parents who want their children's confidence must know how to listen, to listen untiringly. They must be able to show interest in their triumphant little stories as well as in their grievances. They may never

ridicule them, never rebuff them through irritation or nervousness and never deceive them.

They must know how to read their children without trying in any way to force an entry into their hearts or consciences; rather, they must be clever at inviting a confidence, dispelling a cloud, evoking a smile, creating a diversion in case of a mishap or tempest. They must show understanding always and make the children feel that they can tell them everything. Not that they approve of everything, but they take everything into consideration; if then adjustments are called for they make them; if rewards are merited, they bestow them. And when they must punish they do so with only the good of the child in mind so that, if the age of the child warrants it, they will explain the reason for their actions.

If in spite of all this, a child still persists in being withdrawn and uncommunicative, reserved as a hermit, there is nothing else to do but pray. Parents should not grow discouraged. Of course they should try to discover whether this reticence is the result of temperament or conscience worries. It might even be necessary for them to turn to someone else for help, someone who will be more successful because more competent. In many cases this could be a priest. It is a great mistake for parents to want to be the only recipients of their children's confidence. The child, the adolescent must be able to confide in someone. If we are not the one, and someone else is, let us accept the fact humbly. Such renunciation is very meritorious especially for the mother.

"ALL MY TRUST"

"I GET all my trust from my mother," Joan of Arc used to say.

Pauline Jaricot, Foundress of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, could say the same. Every evening her mother used to gaze into her eyes to read the story of the day's fidelities to God's law which she had explained to the little girl with much unction.

Something similar took place in the training of the boy Augustine in Malegue's, "The Master is Here." Never did his mother reprimand him for his failings without reminding him that he had grieved Little Jesus.

"It makes Little Jesus sad when you stamp your foot because you want to go home or when you refuse to leave the table so that it can be set just because you are busy doing a water color in your Christmas drawing book."

Each day he was expected to learn two Catechism questions.

"Every morning after breakfast in Big Catherine's kitchen, mamma heard the recitation of the two Catechism questions she had explained the evening before. Tiny sister Christine balancing herself on her yet unsteady legs used to pull at mamma's dress. That would be just the time when the baby would set up a howl in his cradle.

"Mingled with this morning hubbub were the words of Theology. They were difficult and impressive words. They were like the words grown-ups use when they don't want little children to understand what they are saying. It is true that mamma put other words in their place to explain them."

Happy the man to whom God gives a saintly mother! This verse of Lamartine will always be profoundly true!

Who can tell the mother's great power to make the Faith take root in the mind of the child and to plant

seeds of the most beautiful virtues in his heart. And will we not have to give primary credit to these first lessons of childhood for whatever remains of trust in the mind that has reached maturity and for whatever generosity exists in the souls that have been buffeted by life? The forces of mature age owe much to the lights and inspirations of early age.

Monsignor d'Hulst in one of his famous conferences at Notre Dame in Paris referred to this idea: He said that when a man wants to justify his moral principles he will search his past to find their origin; he will discover that they seem to trace back farther than the beginnings of his conscious thought; they will seem to him as submerged in that distant past when his life was still bound closely to that of his mother and he was as yet unable to sustain himself without the tenderness of her supporting arms.

Should it happen that a child loses his mother at an early age, her memory will remain and protect him. But if she lives what a help she is above all if she has a great soul, a soul that knows how to watch and to pray; to watch without being too obvious about it; for she will not want to awaken haughty resistance; to pray more silently still without however neglecting her duty of good example in prayerfulness.

Ozanam, writing to a friend, stated that he seemed to benefit almost every moment by the nearly constant presence of his mother.

Let me as a mother examine my conscience. By bringing children into the world I have accepted a sublime mission. To give birth to children is in itself something wonderful. But to rear children, how much more difficult! How close to God I must be to lead all my little ones or my big ones as the case may be to the heights of the divine and to help them live on this high plane.

I must grow. I must educate myself. I must acquire what I lack.

FORMATION OF CHARACTER/CONSCIENCE (1)

CHILDREN are naturally upright. They are weak and easily become afraid like the rest of us but they are upright.

They know what they ought to do and what they must not do. They discover that very quickly since they are not only aided by the restraints and prohibitions of their family but also enlightened by the interior verdict of their conscience.

They have no difficulty surmising that if they do not do what is good they will grieve Mamma and Papa and likewise God; furthermore they realize that they will incur a punishment in proportion to their wrong—the principle of the proportion between the sin and the punishment familiar to the Doctors is already implicitly in the heads of these little theologians.

To be sure, it is in no abstract fashion that they acquire such knowledge; they achieve it in situations that are part of their everyday life, to the accompaniment of emotional experiences which are often quite impressive. They feel an inward approval, peace and joy when they have been good and, on the contrary, disquiet, unease, and interior reproach if they have not fulfilled a command. They do not have precise ideas on the subject but an intense feeling; they would not be able to explain the words responsibility, law or liberty; however, a real and profound experience discovers moral reality to them. They were supposed to behave well and they have acted badly, they are in the wrong and deserve to be punished. They feel it, they know it, and they suffer from it. Their childish language, their very silence and embarrassment bear witness to it. The day they learn the correct vocabulary for all of this they will

be capable of putting these realities under their proper classification. Before they have ever learned the words for these realities they have lived the realities.

What a precious advantage for the child to be brought in this way into the region of the invisible! The great philosopher Olle-Laprune stresses this point:

The child "who it seems is entirely controlled by sense impressions, he whom visible nature seems to dominate by its charms and the thousand causes for fright it spreads about him, stops respectful and troubled before an invisible law. Invisible also is the Master, invisible too the Judge whose presence this law makes the child feel. God—the august and Sacred Name that he used to pronounce with docility but without comprehension—now becomes for him a mysterious reality whose invisible smile or secret threats are for him the most precious cause for hope or the greatest reason for fear. God—whom he does not see but who sees him, God—whom he knows so little yet by whom he is perfectly known. God—of whom he thinks only at intervals but who is constantly mindful of him. God—all powerful, wise, good completely good, better than a father, better than a mother, perfectly good and just and holy; what care he must take not to displease such a God! what misfortune to offend Him. How good he ought to be himself, how he ought to be truthful, to be just to all, to do good to others because those are the things God loves; those are the things He commands; those are the things God Himself does in His own sublime fashion, and he must resemble God."

"Invisible grandeurs, invisible beauties: the child who enters into life with all his senses open and avid for stimulation of every sort can nevertheless fall in love with these realities that are inaccessible to the senses; he can aspire to know them better some day, somewhere and finally to look forward to the joy of possessing them then as the best reward for good will and the pain of being deprived of them as the worst punishment for an evil will. This is the way the moral and religious life of the child gets its start."

FORMATION OF CHARACTER/CONSCIENCE (2)

THERE is a story that at a certain Honor's Day a prize was offered to a lazy little fellow by way of consolation; since he did not come in for any victories in achievement, he was given a prize for the best health. He must have had a flair for rhyme for according to the legend this was his response:

I don't care for the prize I did not really earn; Why, to get my good health, I did not make a turn.

To be rewarded for something which had caused him no effort, which represented no attainment on his part seemed odious to him. Lazy though he was, he did not lack intelligence or a sense of disinterestedness.

Most children are quicker to understand the notion of punishment as a just consequence for a wrong done.

They are well aware that to be able materially to accomplish an act is not one and the same thing as being permitted to do it. Children very quickly grasp the idea that Monsignor d'Hulst explained in one of his masterful talks at Notre Dame in Paris:

"We can compare physical necessity to a rigid iron or wooden barrier: As long as it holds out it is impossible to break through; if one does succeed in breaking through it is only because the barrier was knocked down or broken. Duty, moral obligation, is also a barrier, but a spiritual barrier; we can cut through it as we would through a ray of sunshine. Its bright line marks out very clearly the limits beyond

which we must not pass; if we happen to violate it, it lets us pass but closes behind us to continue forming a frontier of light between good and evil."

Whoever does break through this bar of light merits punishment.

How easy it is to profit by the awakenings of morality in the child to help him see clearly into his conscience. We teach him his prayers, the Act of Contrition for example: "O my God, I am very sorry..."; he has no trouble understanding; he knows he has acted badly, that he should not have pulled his sister's hair, disobeyed papa, wanted his own way. He has broken through the bar of light. Even if mother did not see him, someone did and that was God; a kind of inward voice tells him very quietly that he is guilty, that he must make up for it by being sorry, by asking forgiveness, by accepting the little pain that will come to compensate for the pleasure that he had no right to take.

Perhaps it will be necessary to reverse the order of the words, proceeding from the natural to the supernatural. Nothing is simpler: "Regret, sorrow, penance, offense against God, a God infinitely good.... How many difficult words; yet their meaning will unfold bit by bit.

Then when the time for confession comes, when he must say "I confess to Almighty God" only the word confess will seem strange, but only the word not the act; the child will have no difficulty making his accusation. Get him into the habit of making his little examination of conscience; he will tell you his "sins" out loud. I "confess" that is I "admit"; he will understand that he ought to admit and admit to God who is so good all the wrong that he has done.

"Through my fault," I should not have done it. But when I have confessed it, it will disappear, it will be wiped out. And then, of course, I must not do it over again; I must not break through the bar of light again. "Therefore I beseech You. . . " Another difficult word he must learn, but a reality that he does not yet see . . . to be good he must have God's help. By himself everything would be too difficult! How children do stumble over that "by means of Your holy grace" in their Act of Contrition and sometimes we don't blame them! Yet beyond the vocabulary so poorly adapted to them lies a reality which is quite within their power to grasp!

FORMATION OF CHARACTER/CONSCIENCE (3)

SOME children, perhaps the majority of them, readily admit their peccadillos.

There are others though who are very proud, very jealous of that little interior kingdom where an intimate voice, God's voice, is heard, where they can judge their conduct in the light of what that voice demands; into this domain they want no other person to penetrate.

We must respect a child's interior life and not seek to enter there without being invited, not try to learn what he does not wish us to know of that interior life, nor try to find out what he hides with a sort of naive but respectable modesty. Neither should we remind him of painful scenes, now past and forgiven, in which he was clearly off his good behavior; there is danger of humiliating him, of causing him to close up. Discretion always!

This virtue will be an absolute necessity later; it will be no easy virtue to practice either. How painful for the father and the mother not to know what happens in the intimate life of their child! True there are indications that everything is all right or that something is wrong: Eyes that can no longer meet one's gaze, the tilt of the head, the sudden blush of shame, the general appearance that has become less vibrant

and more embarrassed may tell much. But there are some young people, boys and girls, who excel in putting on an act and who never reveal their true depths; they remain closed temples.

It is ideal if parents do know everything about their child. They must however be willing to know only a little and in some cases nothing at all.

One very important lesson we must teach a child is not only to observe the number of his peccadillos but the kind. He should learn to distinguish between important matter, a slight infraction, and simple imperfections. It is a sin when one resists a command of God, an imperfection only when one resists a simple desire of God. When there is question of a command of God, he must know too if the command is concerned with something serious, for then the infraction of that command is a mortal sin provided of course that there was full knowledge and real consent.

Most scruples are caused by inadequate and ill-adapted Catechism instruction at the age when the first conscience problems arise.

It is vitally important that we take great care not to cause the child to live in a perpetual fear of sin. Let him learn to be motivated by love. It is easier by far; the child quickly advances beyond attrition or imperfect contrition and finds love and perfect contrition much more understandable.

Souls that have been warped in childhood by exaggerated fears are in danger of living for the rest of their lives with nervous consciences, without freedom of spirit or joy.

We are to form children of God and not future prisoners of an iron-collar religion. The Gospel is not for a convict squad; we are at ease in our Father's house.

Many defections of later life are due to inadequacies of education. A false conscience is easily made; a soul is easily warped.

EDUCATION IN REVERSE

IT HAS been said that education is the art of developing in a child all the faults he has received from nature and adding all those nature failed to give him.

In this same vein a rather facetious author dared the comment, "Providence gave us parents to show us how we ought not act toward our children."

Someone else even more caustic drew up an infallible recipe for rearing children badly. All he had to do to determine the ingredients was to observe the behavior of certain parents. Could we not put definite names behind a few of the points ourselves. All we must do is observe; examples unfortunately abound:

HERE IS THE INFALLIBLE RECIPE:

- Begin from babyhood to give the child everything he asks for.
- Discuss his wonderful qualities in his presence.
- Observe in his presence that it is impossible to correct him.
- Be sure to have father and mother wrangling in his presence and in disagreement about him.
- Let him get the idea that his father is only a tyrant and good for nothing but to chastise him.

- Let the father show little respect for the mother in his presence.
- Pay no attention to his choice of playmates.
- Let him read anything he wants.
- Try to earn much money for him without giving him good principles to live by and let him have money freely.
- Let him have no supervision during recreation.
- Punish him for a mere awkwardness and laugh at his real faults.
- Take his part against teachers at school or in college when they try to make him come to task.

As far as punishment goes for wrongdoing, how many parents prove cowardly and unwise. Consider the mother's statement, "The only way I can keep my authority is by not exercising it." What a confession of failure!

Some parents let their children do anything and everything. Others intervene but in what a clumsy fashion:

Perhaps they are profuse in threats. "If you do that, this will happen." The child does the wrong and "this" does not happen; the punishment threatened remains hanging in the air. The child knowing what to expect is no longer impressed. We must never make a threat we do not intend to carry out when the infraction has been committed!

Then again they may take to bargaining: "If you do that, I will give you this present." Or they may stoop to argument to force compliance:

"Louis, take your coat."

"But, Mamma it's not worth while."

"Yes it is; take it because it looks threatening. I looked at the barometer and it's low."

"But, Mamma, I tell you it won't rain. . ."

"Thursday, you didn't have your coat and you were soaked to the skin."

"Yes, but Sunday you made me wear it and it didn't rain . . ."

And so it goes on and on. . .

Then parents sometimes permit coaxing to lead them into multiple concessions: A child may be convalescing and wants something to eat which would harm him.

"No, you may not have it."

"Oh, yes Mamma, give it to me."

"You know very well the doctor said you should not have it."

"Only this once, I won't ask again."

"Well, just this once since you want it and because you are sick but it will be your own fault if you get worse."

Who is to be pitied in all these instances? The child whose every whim is satisfied? Or the parents whose inexperience or weakness lead the child to the greatest dangers?

Lack of character in children is often the outgrowth of lack of character in the parents. One can give only what one has.

IMPORTANT NEVERS

- Never make a promise you don't intend to keep. It brings discredit on you and teaches your child to lie.
- Never shout. To rear a child you must control him. Now we are controlled only by qualities we do not have ourselves, a talent beyond our reach. If there is one quality a child does not possesses, it is calm, which is the direct opposite of the extreme mobility of his nature, his impulsive impressionability. Calmness controls him, not shouting.
- Never deceive. "Give me your whistle; you will see what fine music I can make." The child with no defense gives you his whistle and you put it in your pocket saying, "Now with the whistle there, you can't annoy us anymore."

  Or if you want the child to take some disagreeable medicine, you may say "Oh but this is good! Drink it, you will see." The child sips it and pushes away the deceiving cup. You have failed him in your words. A few scenes of this kind and the child will lose all confidence in those who speak to him. If we wish to be believed, we must not abuse belief.
- Never do yourself what the child with a little time and ingenuity can do himself otherwise he will never learn to take the initiative. On the contrary, confront him as soon as possible and as often as possible with tasks that are beyond him but which are capable of challenging him a bit so that he learns to gauge his strength, to remain humble because of non-success and eager for struggle because he wants to conquer the obstacle.
- Never tolerate backtalk to a command, or grumbling, or any argument about it. Never take back a prohibition especially if the child tries to work its recall by tears and coy maneuvering.
- Never present a task to the child as beyond his capabilities as "Could you do that? Don't you think you would be afraid to do that?" Then he gets the idea of a possible sidetracking of the issue or a sliding out of it altogether. No, tell him squarely what to do as if it were just an ordinary simple matter. "Do this. Go there please." In this way the child will not question his ability to do what is asked. If he says he can't do it or shows that he can't do it, there will be time enough to chide him for his cowardice or lack of nerve.
- Never seem to attach importance to little scratches, bumps, and bruises he gets (naturally proper attention should be paid to real needs). The child often cries when he hurts himself just to get attention, being pitied makes him a more interesting individual. If you do not appear excited, he will understand that it is useless to make a tragedy of the affair. Care for the hurts that need care, and far from magnifying the case, explain that it isn't anything much: "You will have many others! Try to have more nerve about it!" The child grows calm.
- Never inflict a humiliating punishment in the presence of others, except in the rare case that might need it to punish an ineradicable pride. Aside from such a case, however, you would be degrading a child beyond reason: "Look how ugly he is!" "How clumsy you are! etc....Or what is worse—"Look

at your brother, see how good he is!" Such comparisons are odious and only excite jealousy.

- Never flatter. "Isn't he darling!" The child knows it only too well. Encourage him but don't praise him. To praise him is to admire him for an advantage he has without merit on his part; to encourage him is to congratulate him on meritorious effort. Never tolerate the adulations of people who visit you either.

TRAINING THE ADOLESCENT

TO TRAIN little ones is difficult enough. When these little ones grow up the difficulty of educating them grows with them.

There is a particular age—between thirteen and seventeen— when the rise of new energies generally produces a crisis. The child is no longer a child; neither is he a grown-up. He is in a period of transition which we must not fear but which we must consider sympathetically; it is a time when we should be ever ready to come to his help at opportune moments.

It is also a time when restraints weigh upon him. Until now the child did not distinguish his individual identity much from those about him. What they thought and felt he was satisfied to feel and think in perfect harmony. But now his personality is emerging. Before this it was indistinct. Oh yes, at times traits of it would shine out and predict the future character but it was only a faint sketch. Now the design takes form and definite lines.

It is thrilling to see the dawn of manhood and womanhood in the young as they rise up to meet life. It is depressing to think of possible deformations! A design can so easily change into a caricature!

There is no question now of a dead image on inert paper! We are concerned with an animated potentiality, with an intense dynamism—a soul seeking itself. It is like a person lost in the night groping about here and there to find the right road. We can speak to the adolescent, guide him, but nothing takes the place of personal experience and it means much to allow the young the liberty to try their luck.

Even as a baby, as soon as he takes his first steps, the child uses all its baby strength to pull away from its mother. The mother had until then held him in her arms. But one day she put him down so that he could learn to stand and to put one foot before the other. As soon as he learnt this new game the little one is ready for his first expedition. And what mother, even though she rejoices at the prowess of the young explorer, does not suffer when she realizes that her arms and her heart can no longer hold back this little conqueror already setting out to meet life?

As the adolescent boy or girl grows older the span of their investigation widens. There is the immense field of their own individuality. How many realities, how many mysteries they encounter at every step! Fortunate that youth who, avid until now to ask questions, remains willing to ask some still! He wants to learn certainly, even more than ever before, only he wants to learn by himself so he withdraws into himself to solve his problems. Who could ever know as he does his little domain; he is jealous of it; he closes his arms about his riches; he yields to no one the right to violate his treasure.

We should not be astonished at this but stimulate their research unobtrusively, provide them, without appearing to do so, with the means to solve their problems; we should not pry into their confidence but rather cleverly inspire and provoke it. Let them realize that mother and father themselves formerly discovered this whole world that challenges their discovery; that mother and father can therefore serve

as prudent but well-informed advisers to the young novices of life.

Then there is the whole world outside of themselves—the frame of their life, their surroundings, and other people; that is quite a universe. What is the significance of such a smile, such a silence, such an action? They thought everyone was good—that was a mistake! They thought that life was conquered without difficulty—they have to struggle hard: How much work to learn the least thing!

And then the whole domain of religion. It was all so simple formerly. Now there are problems on every side. And love? This whole transformation that they sense within themselves? Those impulses of feeling? Those sensations never before experienced, organic phenomena whose nature and reason they do not know?

We need great sympathy before their laborious and often worried seeking and also much vigilance mingled with a gentle firmness, high moral principles, and exceptional psychological insight almost bordering on prophecy. Above all we need much prayer.

GIRLS VERSUS BOYS (1)

THE training of adolescence ought to make much allowance for the difference between the sexes and for the difference of individual temperaments within each sex.

The boy as he grows older becomes more and more individualistic. Everything exists for him. His little person makes itself conspicuous without fear. He loves to make noise not only because of his love for activity but also to assert his presence. In games he likes to direct and if he envisions the future he always sees himself in the role of a leader.

He must be taught that other people exist and what is more, that he has the duty not only to refrain from harming them but to help them. Every opportunity for him to render service should be used to advantage—to take care of his little sisters gallantly and willingly, to run on errands for father or mother or someone else in the household. The boy and later the man is a great egoist. It is wise to counteract very early this tendency of his to make himself the center of interest, to turn his attention to careers of devoted self-sacrifice, to impress him with the repercussions his actions have upon others and to enlighten him on his duty to give much since he has received much and to penetrate him with the realization that he has a responsibility toward his own.

The little girl as she advances toward womanhood—and this begins quite early—very quickly becomes conscious of herself as part of a relationship. She feels herself physically weaker than her brothers and her powers of feeling orientate her even at that early age whether she is aware of it or not, toward love—in the beginning toward the couple “mamma and baby” but later toward the couple “husband and wife.”

Much less individualistic than the boy—although she can be so in her own way and sometimes fiercely so—she is above all family-minded. She loves to rock the baby, to help her mother. If she prefers one study more than another, history, literature or mathematics, it is more often because of the teacher who teaches it than the subject itself. Early in the little girl’s life are verified the words of George Sand concerning woman, “Behind the things that she loves there is always someone.”

Because of the complexities of feeling, the education of the adolescent girl is more delicate and more difficult than the education of the adolescent boy. The boy is more heavy, more blunt, more matter of fact, less given to fine distinctions; the phenomena of puberty are more tardy in him and are generally

not at all or scarcely ever accompanied by any fits of feeling but rather a mere hunger for sensations: he is still the individualist.

Because of her periods, a phenomenon that often troubles the adolescent girl even after its mysterious significance has been chastely and adequately explained to her, she becomes more curious and uneasy about all that bears on the problem of life and is much more susceptible to emotional unbalance and the fascination of abandoning herself to daydreams than a boy of her age. If the adolescent boy is healthy, he doesn't indulge in dreaming; he makes noise or pulls all kinds of pranks. The girl, even when she loves study, loves still other things and she is much attracted by the perspective of an eventual giving of herself.

Beautiful is the task of giving her a clear idea of her essential vocation; to guard her from false notions; to get her to be diligent in the tasks of the moment, her house duties and school assignments; to direct her need for unreserved giving so that what is but a vague instinct within her becomes translated into terms of clear duty; to impress her with the immense responsibility of having been chosen to give life unless God chooses her to renounce this power, for love of Him, in virginity.

GIRLS VERSUS BOYS (2)

EVERYDAY experiences give many examples of the distinctive differences between the two sexes especially during their adolescence: the egocentric interests of the boy, the self-radiating tendencies of the girl. The boy thinks about his future exploits; the girl dreams of possible children. In the one, love of glory; in the other love of love itself.

The following bit of conversation between two sisters is in itself an amusing commentary on feminine adolescent psychology.

"What are you thinking of," the twelve year old asked her fifteen year old sister, "of your future husband?"

"A husband," protested the elder, "I am too young. I have a lot of time before I begin thinking of a husband!"

"Well then what are you thinking about?"

"I was planning what kind of trimmings I would have on my wedding dress."

Even when we take into account the differences created by nature between boys and girls, we still must make allowances for different temperaments within the sexes. Each child lives in a world of his own, in a world that is strangely different from the world of those about him. With one individual maternal influence will have greater force; with another, paternal influence. One child may have vigorous health, whereas another is delicate. In the one a melancholy temperament may predominate; in another, the exact opposite, the sanguinic with extrovert tendencies conspicuous. One child may be calm and poised; another, a little bundle of nerves. Consequently, if the educator has but one method of dealing with all, a single and only method, he can expect to meet with disappointments.

However in providing for these individual differences a real problem must be faced: It is not sufficient to correct the one child and refrain from correcting the other; to congratulate the one and ignore the success of the other and so on through all the possible variations that might be in order. All this must be done

while preserving the impression of treating all alike. If children perceive, as they sometimes do with reason, that there is partiality shown to one or other of the family, authority is broken down, jealousy enters and soon constant wrangling results.

The ideal is to maintain poise, serenity, evenness of temper, and a steadiness of behavior that nothing can upset.

Superiors of religious orders are advised to make use of a practice which is beneficial for all—an honest examination periodically of their faithful fulfillment of the trust confided to them. Have I given evidence of any partiality or any unjustifiable toleration of wrong? Have I seen to it that the rules have been observed, the ways of customs of the order and its holy traditions held in honor?

In what way are things not going as they should? One can pass quickly over what is as it should be, thanking God humbly for it but direct attention by choice to what is defective and faulty to determine to make the necessary corrections either in one's person or one's work. Mussolini's comment has a point here: "It is useless to tell me about what is going along well. Speak to me immediately of what is going badly."

If only parents would make it a habit to practice this counsel suggested to monks: Stop a moment to observe the train pass; look to see if the lighting functions, if the wheels are well oiled, if there is any need to fear for the connections. People do that from time to time in regard to their personal life and we call it a Retreat. It is strongly advisable to make a retreat to examine oneself on the conduct and management of the home, of one's profession; such a retreat should be sufficiently frequent to prevent painful surprises.

Our Lord said that when one wishes to build a tower, he sits down to calculate the cost and requirements for a solid structure. What a tower is the Christian home! That is something to construct! How necessary are foundations that will not crumble, materials that will hold solidly! How essential an able contractor, attention to every detail, care to check every stone, exactitude in the measurements for every story . . . !

Perhaps I have forgotten to sit down . . . to calculate . . . to get on my knees. There is still time!

A FATHER'S LETTER

RACINE the great classic dramatist wrote a letter to his son urging him to complete fidelity in his religious duties and to love for the interior life.

"You beg me to pray for you. If my prayers were good for anything you would soon be a perfect Christian, who hoped for nothing with more ardor than for his eternal salvation. But remember, my Son, that the father and mother pray in vain for their children if the children do not remember the training their parents gave them. Remember, my Son, that you are a Christian, and think of all that character makes of obligation for you, all the passions it requires you to renounce. For what would it benefit you to acquire the esteem of men if you would jeopardize your soul? It will be the height of my joy to see you working out your salvation. I hope for it by the grace of Our Lord."

When Racine was thirty-eight and at the height of his power, his religious directors through the misguided zeal of their Jansenistic spirit commanded him to give up writing for the theatre which he did with untold pain. Consequently, when he spoke to his son of the practice of renunciation, he could speak with authority.

Especially sensitive to physical suffering, he accepted sickness humbly and generously. “I have never had the strength to do penance; what an advantage then for me that God has had the mercy to send me this.”

It is a great grace for children to have a father who teaches the divine law with firmness, and who moreover lives this divine life, joining personal example to precept.

Am I sufficiently attentive to give my children the supernatural equipment they need? Am I sufficiently careful about that still more important duty of giving them a good example always and in everything.

If there was too much severity in Racine’s manner it was due to his own training at Port-Royal, the Jansenist center. When his brother Lionval was only five years old he insisted that he would never go to the theatre for fear of being damned. Madelon, at ten years had to observe Lent to the very end even though she felt ill because of it. The mother kept them in step. Did she not command young Louis Racine who had indulged in writing about twelve stanzas of poetry on the death of a dog to betake himself to Boileau for a good scolding?

There must be no exaggeration in the exercise of authority; it would no longer be Christian in character but an erroneous way of understanding the morality and perfection of the Gospel. It is essential to retain a zealous will on the part of the children and a courageous practice of generosity. We must however always remember that they are children and not impose upon them too heavy a yoke thereby running the danger of giving them an incorrect idea of religion or of disgusting them even with its most balanced practice.

We must be mindful too that some day they will be confronted with fearful difficulties. They will need a training that is not harsh but strong otherwise we can fear shipwreck or at least ineffective returns.

If my profession or my health prevent me from fasting, am I careful to get a dispensation, to substitute another mortification for it, to manifest an exemplary moderation on all occasions, in general, a real detachment from food and body comforts; to deny myself amusements that might prove dangerous?

MISUNDERSTOOD CHILDREN

ANDRE BERGE in his book on “Bewildered Youth” gives us the story of a young man who had been left completely to himself by his parents. Taken up with their own affairs, business and pleasure, these parents let their son grow up with no concern at all for his soul, his ambitions, his difficulties, his temptations, his failings.

At first, the youth relished this liberty which he interpreted as reserve on the part of his parents. But soon he came to realize that it was nothing more than cowardice, abandonment of duty, and flagrant desertion of obligation on their part. He was living in the home but was not of the home—he was a mere boarder in a hotel. As soon as he was out of his childhood, they showed no more care for him. He found himself confronting life alone, confused, cut off. He should have been able to expect counsel, affection, protection, light. Nothing of the sort did he receive. Instead he met with selfishness; faced by loneliness, life began to pall upon him; he had no one to untangle his problems, no one to point out definite steps to follow on the bewildering way.

Unable to bear living any longer in this way with no vital ties binding him to those who should have been nearest to him, he decided to break all connections, to go away. Material separation from his own

would but serve to accentuate the separation of their souls.

He left this note as an explanation of his conduct and a reproach for theirs. “To my parents, Why do you desert me? You do not understand that I am stifled between these walls and that my heart is bursting. Do you not understand that I am growing up and that life is calling me, that I am alone all day with its voice? You who could have so lovingly directed me in life, why do you abandon me?”

“Well, so much the worse, I will meet life alone. I am so far from you already through your fault.”

How heavy the obligations of parents! Let us not consider now the case of grossly selfish parents as described in the preceding story. We shall consider parents who are concerned about accomplishing their mission.

Are they not in danger of two extremes in the fulfillment of their duty: either to exaggerate their control or to exaggerate their reserve.

If they try to exercise too much control over the young adventurers in freedom who are making ready for their first flights will they not incur the blame of tyranny, excessive watchfulness and supervision?

If, on the other hand, they try to avoid this reproach, are they not going to lack firmness? By trying to win confidence through a gentleness that gives free rein are they not going to see all the restraints which they deem good broken down and the advice they judge opportune utterly ignored?

How have I succeeded in this problem of training? Do I steer my bark with proper mastery? The reefs are many; a solid craft is needed, a steady hand at the helm. Am I acquainted with the route, the true merits of my crew?

My God grant me the grace to know how to rear my little world as you want me to; to know how to form each of my children according to Your plans; to know how to attain balance in sharpness, firmness and restraint. Grant that the youth formed in my home may never be confused, lost before life but rather know always where to find counsel, support, the warmth of love and guidance, an understanding and patient heart that can give help with enlightened insight.

A DEFAULTING FATHER

A RELIGIOUS was trying to extricate a young man of twenty-two from a distressing and almost insurmountable difficulty. The young man wrote him the following explanation for falling so low.

“. . . I was endowed as any normal person and would have been able to succeed in my studies as anyone else but for some wretched habits—and I say these words, trembling with a powerless rage—wretched habits that came to poison the work of God. A cousin and a friend bear with me the responsibility for the first steps toward those devastating sensations that enkindled the odious flame which in turn upset my mental and physical health. No more willpower or rather no more strength despite good will; no more memory; all these results followed in succession. I blame my parents especially my father who had given up all religious practices. He never spoke to me with a view to understanding me; never did we have the least conversation which could indicate any common bond of ideas or feeling; he fed my body, that is all....”

What a terrible indictment are these words! How they prove the necessity of watching the associations of the children, their work, the reasons for their laziness; the importance of keeping their confidence, of

knowing how to win that confidence; of showing them understanding and a willingness to help; of giving them an assurance of victory.

“I was endowed as any normal person and would have been able to succeed.” Nothing more readily weakens the resilience of the powers of the mind and the heart than lust. What the young man said is exactly true; he had abandoned himself to impurity, he lost the keenness of his intelligence, the retentiveness of his memory and a relish for effort. Even grave physical injuries sometimes result. “Devastating sensations” and “the odious flame” quickly depleted and consumed vital energies.

“A cousin and a friend.” How absolutely necessary is vigilance over the friendships that circumstances and relationships often provide, and sometimes alas that certain corrupted individuals seek to establish to give vent to their secret taste for perversion.

If the child had confided in someone at the onset of the first serious difficulties! But nothing in the attitude of the parents invited confidence, a request for enlightenment, a humble avowal of imprudence or faults already committed. How many children, how many youths yearn to speak! Someone, their father or mother or a director must take the first step. Nothing happens. Nobody imagines that they want help; nobody deigns to interest themselves in them. The mother is absorbed in her worldliness or completely oblivious of their needs; the father is wrapped up in his business; the spiritual director if they have one at all does not find the time or the means to help . . .

And the child, the young boy or the young girl, carries the weight of inward suffering and is stifled by it.

“I blame my parents . . . never did my father speak to me with a view to understanding me; never did we have the least conversation which could indicate any common bond of ideas or feeling; he fed my body, that is all.”

Did this father realize that even while he was nourishing the body of his son, he was contributing to the death of his soul by a double sin of omission! He did not help his son in his moral life when he needed it; he gave him a very bad example by openly abandoning the Christian law.

Such sins are paid for and paid for painfully. How prevent lack of training and mistakes of training from producing their disastrous effects?

To develop the body is fine, commendable, and a duty. Even more important is it to develop the soul, to protect it, to strengthen it, to uplift it.

A MOTHER TO HER SON

WHEN Leon Bloy was about twenty years old, he fell into one of those crises not uncommon in youth, particularly in youth whose environment brings contact with unbelievers and persons of loose morals, and he drifted from his religion. He was wretchedly unhappy besides, unhappy because of the very direction he was taking; but an involuntary confusion and probably a certain amount of willful pride prevented him from breaking with doubt to return to the path of light.

The mother read her son’s soul clearly. She did not reproach him, nor did she speak to him exclusively nor immediately of his religious problem; she attributed his interior troubles to different causes of an inferior order which more than likely played a part in his wretchedness. She wrote to him:

“How is it my dear child that you do not write to us. I feel heavy hearted because of it for I am sure that

you do not realize what is taking place in your poor soul; all kinds of things are conflicting within it—it is ardent and lacks the nourishment proper to it; you turn from one side to the other and you cannot tell what really bothers you. Ah! poor child, be calm, reflect. It is not that you feel your future lost or compromised; at your age one cannot have established his future or despaired of it; it is not for most persons your age still uncertain. No, it is not that, Your work, your studies do not show sufficient progress? Why? Perhaps because you want to do too many things at once; you are too impatient. No, not that either? Your mind is willing enough but your heart and your soul are suffering; they have so many yearnings that you are scarcely aware of, and their unease and their suffering react upon your mind sapping from it necessary strength and attention.

"You are suffering, you are unhappy. I feel all that you experience and yet I am powerless to console you, to encourage you much as I should love to do so. Ah! that we might have the same convictions! Why have you rejected the faith of your childhood without a profound examination of your reason for and against it? The statements of those whom faith irritates or who have no religion for lack of instruction have made an impression on your young imagination; but just the same your heart needs a center that it will never find on earth. It is God, it is the infinite you need and all your yearnings are driving you there. You belong to that select number of elect to whom God communicates Himself and in whose regard He is prodigal of his love when once they have consented to humble themselves by submitting to the obscurities of faith."

What a frightening duty mothers have! To bring forth the bodies of their children is a beautiful ministry; to rear their souls is an even greater ministry.

What anguish for a mother when a grown child, a son in early manhood or a daughter in early womanhood cuts loose from faith, and considers God lightly! If ever she feels that she has lost her hold over her son or daughter, that they are escaping her, it is when she sees them follow the paths of doubt or fall under the spell of the intoxicating enchantments of flirtation.

A mother must continue to bring forth her children all her life. In this sense they are always her little ones. Not that she makes them feel their bonds of dependence any longer but that she watches over them. And she prays! Except for a brief reminder from time to time, the clear statement of her hopes joined to the definite but loving message of the father, an occasional letter in which true principles are recalled, the chief role of a mother whose adult child has strayed is prayer, patient waiting and sacrifice—the persevering effort to become a saint.

What if she were to die before she sees the return of the Prodigal? What if the Child were to die before she has seen him "return"?

She should not be discouraged. Can we know the mystery of souls? Can we know what takes place in the last moments? Can we know what goes on within when the exterior reveals nothing? Can we know the value of a mother's tears? Monica will continue to the end of time to convert Augustine; but Monica must be a saint.

TICK TOCK

THE mother of Cardinal Vaughan had fourteen children—eight boys and six girls. Remarkable educator that she was, she believed that she owed the best part of her time to her little world.

The children's special room looked like the nave of a Church for each little boy and girl had his statue to

care for and they never failed to put flowers before it on special occasions.

With what art this mother settled a quarrelsome boy or a vain or untruthful little girl! With the littlest ones she was not afraid to become a little one and like them to sit on the ground. Thus, placed on their level, as the biography of her Jesuit son expresses it, she used to put her watch to their ears and explain to them that someday God would stop the tick tock of their lives and that He would call to Himself in heaven His children whom He had lent to earth.

In the course of the day, Mrs. Vaughan loved to pick our one or other of her band, preferably two, chosen on the basis of their earnest efforts or some particular need for improvement, and make a visit to Church. Yes, they should pray at home too; they had God in their hearts; but in each village or in each section of town, there is a special house generally of stone where Our Lord lives as He once lived at Nazareth except that now He remains hidden under the appearances of a little Host. She explained to them that prayer consists not in reciting set words but in conversing with Jesus. And if they had been very good she would let them kiss the altar cloth and sometimes the altar itself, a favor the children regarded as most precious. When they had beautiful flowers in their green house they brought them to Church; happy and proud were the ones who were entrusted with delivering the bouquets or the vases of flowers!

Besides the visits made to "Jesus, the Head" there were also visits to the "members of Jesus," "What you do to the least of My brethren you do to me." And Mrs. Vaughan explained to each child according to its capacity to understand the great duty of charity and the reason for this duty. She did not hesitate to take them into sordid homes. Sometimes people were horrified to see her take the children to see the sick who suffered from a contagious disease. Wasn't she afraid her children would contract it? But kind, firm Mrs. Vaughan did not allow herself to be the least disturbed by such comments. "Sickness? Well if one of them contracted a sickness while visiting the poor, that would still not be too high a price to pay for Christian charity. Besides God will protect my children much better than mother-love can."

Here was true formation in piety, true formation in charity. Here too was encouragement to follow a high ideal.

Herbert, the eldest of the boys, was once quite concerned over a hunting trip that the weather threatened to spoil. "Pray mamma," he said, "that we have good weather!"

Mrs. Vaughan, more concerned to lift her son's soul than to secure him a pleasurable time answered smilingly, "I shall pray that you will be a priest!" How the boy took such an answer at the moment is not recorded. We do know this: Herbert was . . . the future Cardinal!

Mrs. Vaughan also gave her children an appreciation of the fine arts. She herself played the harp delightfully. From time to time, she gathered her household about her for a gala time playing, singing, and a bit of mimicry; she always used the occasion to remind the children that there are other melodies and other joys more beautiful than those of earth.

TRAINING IN GENEROSITY

THE child is instinctively selfish, but he easily learns generosity. His training should be directed toward it.

Little Rose of Lima's childhood was marked by a series of accidents, maladies, and sufferings which the

crude treatment of that time often aggravated rather than relieved. When only three months old she crushed her thumb under a trunk lid and the nail had to be removed. She also had to undergo an ear operation which was followed by a skin disease that began on her head; her mother treated it with a salve which burnt her so severely that the surgeon had to treat her for weeks, removing proud flesh so that the healthy skin could heal.

Thanks to her mother's exhortations, this little girl of four years bore the cruel pain with an astonishing calmness and in perfect silence. Are not the staggering mortifications we see her imposing on herself later due to her early training?

Like all little girls, she was vain and took considerable care of her hair which was very beautiful. Her brother used to throw mud at it and get it all dirty just to tease her. Rose became very angry, but the brother, recalling perhaps some sermon he had heard, assumed a preaching tone on one of these occasions and said to her solemnly, "Take care, vanity will be your ruin; the curled hair of girls are cords from hell which bind the hearts of men and drag them into the eternal flames."

Rose did not answer, but bit by bit began to understand . . . and she detached herself. That detachment prepared her for greater sacrifices and soon we see her offering her virginity to God.

Jacqueline was another little girl, a little girl of our own day, who learned the lesson of sacrifice. She was sick and suffering much. "Oh, I believe nobody has ever had pain like mine!"

"Where does it hurt?" she was asked.

"In my stomach, in my head, everywhere!"

"Think of Saint Francis who had a red hot iron applied to his eyes as a treatment. . ."

This time her attention was caught. She forgot her own misery to sympathize with her dear saint whom people had hurt.

"Did they cure him after all that?"

Guy de Fontgalland had to have many strychnine injections in his leg.

"Offer it to Jesus, my darling," suggested his mother. "He was crowned with thorns for love of you."

"Oh yes, that is true and He kept the thorns in His head while they quickly removed the needle from my leg."

A mother had three children; the oldest was four, the second, three, and the baby, twenty months. It was Good Friday. Why not encourage them to offer Jesus on the Cross some little sacrifice which would cost them a little?

"My children, I will not deprive you of your chocolate candy at lunch today; but little girls who love Jesus will know themselves how to sacrifice their chocolate."

She made no further reference to it. None of the children answered. That evening the mother was very much moved to see the three chocolate bars at the foot of the Crucifix. Our Lord must have smiled at the childish offering; one of the candy bars bore the teeth marks of the baby who had hesitated before the offering and begun to nibble on her chocolate.

These stories of successful lessons in generosity are encouraging. What others have achieved, can I not

achieve too?

MOTHERS AND VOCATIONS

WHEN Motta was elected to the Swiss Federal Council his first act was to send this telegram to his mother saying, “To my venerated mother, who remaining a widow while I was still a child, engraved in my heart the concept of duty by teaching me that duty dominates all interests, all selfishness, all other concerns.”

To be sure God remains the Master of vocations. Motta was not entering upon Holy Orders. His providential position was to be quite different and very fruitful besides.

What is certain is that never—or shall we say rarely, very rarely—is a vocation born into a family unless the mother has inculcated in her children a sense of duty and a habit of sacrifice. Of course, all children who receive a strong supernatural training do not enter the priesthood or religious life, but no child enters upon any career calling for great self-sacrifice, prescinding some unusual influence which is rare, if he does not acquire early in life a solid spirit of renunciation and generosity in the accomplishment of duty.

On the other hand, where mothers know how to go about teaching and above all practicing complete fidelity to duty and total renunciation, where they always put the supernatural love of God before material love for their children, Our Lord finds it easy to choose His privileged souls.

Monsignor d’Hulst said many a time to Abbe Leprince, “It takes a truly Christian mother to make a good priest.

The seminary polishes him off but does not give him the substance, the “sacerdotal spirit.”

All things considered, that holds true for novitiates and religious life. Nothing replaces family training, above all the influence of the mother. But that training and that influence must be wholly supernatural.

Madame Acarie, foundress of a French Carmelite Convent where she was known as Sister Marie of the Incarnation, strove earnestly to rear her six children for God. She explained to them: “I would not hesitate to love a strange child more than you if his love for God were greater than yours.”

However, individual free will always remains and God is Always Master of His gifts. That thought ought to calm the fear—unjustifiable as it is but humanly understandable—of certain mothers who think, “If I conduct my home along lines too thoroughly Christian, if I instill into my children too strong a habit of the virtues which lead to total renunciation, to an all embracing zeal, I shall see my sons and daughters renouncing marriage one by one and setting off for the priesthood or the convent.”

If that were to happen, where would be the harm? But that rarely happens in practice. Furthermore, is marriage a state of life that does not require a sense of duty or abnegation?

Let there be no anxiety on this score but perfect peace. The important thing now is not that God might choose so- and-so but that the home give Our Lord maximum glory; that each child whatever its destiny serve an apprenticeship in generosity and the true spirit of the Gospel. Everything else as far as the future is concerned should be left to God.

PRIESTS IN THE FAMILY

THE supreme honor for Christian families is to give priests to God. The father can do much to inspire a priestly vocation but the mother who is often closer to the children can do more. For this she needs a priestly soul, a gift that is not so rare in mothers as one might believe. “There are,” said Rene Bazin, “mothers who have a priestly soul and they give it to their children.”

The lack of priests is a terrible sickness of the world today, a sickness that is growing worse. The war has depleted their number and the absence of priestly influence in many parishes before and during the war has damaged more than one vocation.

It is necessary that Christian families desire to give priests to the Church; that they beg God for the grace to prepare to the best of their ability for the eventual flowering of the priesthood.

Christian families should desire to give priests. Such a desire presupposes a profound esteem for the priesthood on the part of the parents. What a pity it is when a child who broaches the subject of becoming a priest meets with his father’s unreasonable anger, “If you mention vocation to me again, I’m going to strangle your confessor for it!” Can there be any greater blessing than a priest in a family?

Christian families should pray: A priestly vocation is a supernatural favor; prayer is essential to obtain it. God’s gifts are free, that is true, but we know that He makes some of His choice graces depend upon the prayers of His friends.

Christian families should prepare for vocations: Parents should know how to detect the germs of a vocation. “I hear the grain growing,” said an old peasant as he walked about in his field. No one can better read the soul of a child than the mother. “I know him through and through as if I had made him.” This rather common but profound statement expresses very well the sort of intuition mothers have for all that concerns their child. Although the boy himself may not have discovered the divine germ, the mother, if she is keen and close to God, has been able to discern it.

How then help this germ to bud? Help it gently, for there must be no pressure brought to bear upon the child. Suggest, yes; force, no.

Inspire great esteem for the priesthood. Consider a priest’s visit to the home as a privilege and a festive occasion. “From the age of seven,” declared Father Olier, the founder of the Sulpicians, “I had such an esteem for a priest that in my simple childish mind I believed them no longer human.” When asked the source of his great esteem, he said, “From my father and my mother.”

“Dear child, since you love to go to church so much and since you are so good in public speaking, you ought to become a priest,” suggested the father to his son, the future martyr, Blessed Perboyre.

Often the mother has quicker insight and longer-ranged vision. The father sometimes resists the vocation of his child. Such was the case with Saint Francis de Sales and Saint Alphonsus Ligouri. The father of Saint Alphonsus refused to speak to him for a whole year.

Sometimes though the father is the one who inspires the love for the priesthood. At the time of the confiscation of Church property in 1905 in France, a father perched his son on his shoulders to watch the pillage of the churches to incite in him a desire to become a defender of the Church later and if possible a priest.

Madame de Quelen did not hesitate to bring her son to the prison of the Carmelite priests to visit the

priests interned there. The bishop later chose the Church of this Carmelite prison for his See.

If a child seems drawn to the priesthood show him the high motives that can lead him to embrace such a calling— the desire to imitate Our Lord and the desire to save souls.

What a reward the parents reap at their son's ordination or on the day of their death. That repays them for all the sacrifices they willingly made; repays them with interest.

THE MOTHER OF A SAINT

MADAME DE BOISY, the mother of Saint Francis de Sales, brought many precious virtues with her to the chateau of Thorens in Savoy where her husband lived. Unassuming and kind, she considered the village households around her estate almost as part of her family; she showed concern for their poverty and sufferings, settled their differences and exercised a control over them that was highly successful for the simple reason that she was careful not to make a show of it. Watchful to see that her servants were truly a part of the family, she encouraged them, without constraining them, to practice their faith and offered to read spiritual books to them herself after the evening meal; she invited all of them to attend the family prayer.

Unfortunately her marriage promised to be sterile. At Annecy in a church dedicated to Our Lady of Liesse, she begged God to give her a son, promising to "exercise all her care to make him worthy of heaven." On August 1567, Francis de Sales was born. He was so frail a child that all feared for his life.

As he grew older, the child had no greater delight than to show kindness to the unfortunate and to distribute among the poor the delicacies his mother gave him for this purpose. It is said of him that by way of thanking his mother he promised her, "When I am my own master, I will give you a beautiful red silk dress every year."

At the same time she was training her little boy to almsgiving, Madame de Sales was also educating him to love of God and to sacrifice.

Soon the hour of separation struck. The child had to leave for the school of La Roche and later for the College at Annecy. He was beloved by all, excused the faults of his comrades and one day even took a whipping in place of his cousin Gaspard de Sales. Shortly after his First Holy Communion he told his mother that he wanted to receive the tonsure some day and that therefore she ought to have his beautiful blond curls cut now.

Francis had two brothers. To characterize them and himself, he developed a comparison between the trio and the seasoning of a salad saying, "Jean-Francis with his violent temper furnishes the vinegar; Louis with his wisdom the salt; and I, the good-natured chubby Francis, put in the oil because I love mildness."

Francis possessed a secret of which his mother was the confidant: He wanted to be a priest at any cost. Madame de Sales shared his dream and upheld her son in it. After six years at Jesuit schools and colleges accompanied by outstanding success he entered the University of Padua. Here he astonished his professors with the brilliant way he defended his thesis although he was scarcely twenty-four at the time.

The father already envisioned his son as a great lawyer, then a senator, and the founder of a fine family, but Francis, enlightened by a providential experience he had one day while riding through a forest, decided not to delay his consecration to God any longer.

His father objected. The mother intervened, “Can we dispute with God over a soul He wants for His service?” Secretly she had clerical clothes made for Francis. The post of provost of the Cathedral Chapter became vacant. The father finally gave in and on June 8, 1593, Francis was ordained to the diaconate. In the opinion of his father, who missed the joy of seeing him a bishop, Francis preached too much and didn’t put in enough Greek and Latin when he did preach. But Francis knew how to talk to souls as his famous missions at Chablais strikingly demonstrated. Rich and poor besieged his confessional.

On December 8, 1602, Francis, who was then thirty-five gave his first episcopal blessing to his mother, who soon put herself under his spiritual direction. One of the last joys of this noble mother was to read her son’s book, *“Introduction to Devout Life,”* which met with spectacular success.

A stroke brought the saint’s mother to the point of death. The holy bishop of Annecy came hurriedly to her bedside. She recognized him, took his hand and kissed it, then putting up her arms to draw his head closer to her to kiss him, she said, “You are my father and my son!”

Francis closed her eyes at death. Broken by sorrow, he wrote to Madame de Chantel, “It has pleased God to take from this world our very good and very dear mother in order to have her, as I strongly hope, at His right hand, since she was one of the sweetest and most innocent souls that could be found.”

Sons are worth what their mothers are worth.

PARENTS OF SAINTS

SAINT FRANCIS DE SALES was the first child of Madame de Boisy. Saint Paul of the Cross was the first of sixteen children. The saint in the family is not always the oldest. Saint Bernard was the third of seven. Saint Thomas Aquinas was the sixth child in the family. Saint Therese of the Child Jesus was the last of nine children. Saint Ignatius of Loyola the last of thirteen.

What glory would have been lost to the Church if the parents of these children had consulted their selfishness rather than their duty of parenthood and had left buried in the realms of nothingness these little beings destined to become saints! It brings to mind the conversation between two women, the one voluntarily sterile, the other surrounded by fine children. The first woman explained to the second that she just couldn’t be tied down. The second responded with the classic argument:

“And suppose that your father and mother had reasoned like that, where would you be?”

The saints are rarely only children for two reasons: The first, that there cannot be any sanctity without a habit of renunciation and this habit is much more readily acquired in a large family where each one must forget self to think of others; where the rubbing of character against character whittles down selfishness; where the parents do not have time to overwhelm their offspring with a foolish indulgence that spoils them.

The second, that God gives the grace of a holy call, by preference, where there is an integral practice of virtue, where virtue is held in honor, where the parents do not fear difficulty but trust in Divine Providence.

Saint Vincent de Paul was one of five children and Saint Vincent Ferrer, one of eight, Saint Aloysius Gonzaga, Blessed Perboyre, Saint Bernadette were each, one of eight children. In the family of the Cure

of Ars there were six children; in that of Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque, seven; in that of Saint Benedict Joseph Labre, fifteen. In the family of Saint Catherine of Siena, there were twenty-two children of the same marriage. And how many more examples we could still find!

There is a charming Breton legend that carries an equally charming lesson. One day Amel, the fisherman, and his wife, Penhov, who used to bring fresh fish to the monks, had walked out with their child to bring in the nets. They were overtaken by the tide. The water rose higher and higher and higher.

“Wife, this is our last hour; put your two feet on my shoulders; in this way you will hold out longer...and love my memory.” Penhov obeyed. Amel sunk into the sand like a post driven in with a hammer.

Penhov seized the child and lifting it above her said, “Put your two feet on my shoulders; in this way you will hold out longer. And love deeply the memory of your father and mother.” The mother too sank beneath the water and soon only the golden hair of the child floated on the water.

An angel of God passed by. He seized the child’s hair and pulled. “My, how heavy you are!” Another blond head appeared, that of Penhov who had not let go of her boy’s feet. “How heavy you both are!” Then Amel appeared for he had not let go of his wife’s feet....by the child the father and mother had been saved!

Who knows whether or not some parents will enter Paradise because an angel has seized their child by the hair!

What a beautiful letter of introduction for Heaven is a child and above all a canonized child!

TRAINING IN CHARITY

JEANNE-ANCELOT-HUSTACHE gives us a picture of her little daughter, Jacqueline, in the book entitled *“The Book of Jacqueline.”*

She is a well-endowed child; she is made much of, in fact, too much petted by her grandmother, by her father, by her sister who is extremely proud of her, and by all the guests of the home. She is in danger of becoming a charming, little, self-centered individual as so many children are.

Happily, attentive care watches over her and strives to give the child the spirit of charity, love for the poor, for children, for the weak and the suffering. Little by little, Jacqueline opens her heart to this love, toward the suffering of the world.

She finds exquisite words, unexpected delicacy in greeting people, in thanking them, and in easing every wound that she guesses with a subtle and tender intuition. She is embarrassed rather than triumphant because of the special advantages she has over companions who are less gifted, poorer, and less endowed. She pities the poor beggar on the boulevard; she brightens the lives of the aged sick in the hospice of Ligny with her refreshing graciousness. At seven years this is how she prays to the Blessed Virgin for an unfortunate servant:

“O my Mother, my Mother, please deliver Yvonne. The poor little one. Nobody wants her. Her father doesn’t want her, her mother is now far from her. She stole, she is in prison, she is sad and never will anyone take her from it, never until her death; I alone on earth love her, I love her because she seems to say to me, “If they would let me alone with you, I would never do anything bad.”

"I alone on earth, I love her." That is the answer of Jacqueline to the secret appeal of the merciful Christ: She will give herself entirely to those who have no one to love them; she will be their Sister of Charity, their Little Sister of the Poor, their Sister of Mercy.

The hour of God for this privileged child was to come in an unexpected way. She was to die while still very young and she was to go to the Christ of the extended Arms, the Christ who loves little children who are charitable and pure.

What an advantage for the child's later life, if the parents have succeeded in making it alert to the refinements of charity, to a concern for the needs of the world.

They do not lack opportunities. Perhaps mother and child are taking a walk. Here comes a poor grandmother, gathering dead branches, leading along an emaciated, sickly child. "Suppose we go to their aid?" suggests the mother to her little one.

Christmas comes. In many families some good little children will have nothing, not the smallest present. Their papa is too poor; he earns just enough to provide bread to his household. Playthings? By no means; playthings cost too much.

"Suppose we bring them that doll you don't play with anymore. Mother will dress it again so that it will look fine." or, "Suppose you look for that mechanical horse you relegated to the attic. Papa will repair it so that it will seem like new."

Then there are the Missions. A terrible flood in some land has been reported. How many people are suffering! Let us fix up a bank into which each one can put his little alms! When we have a nice sum, we can send it over there. Or perhaps there is an occasion to ransom a little pagan baby so that it can be reared as a Christian. The opportunity to explain that spiritual alms are superior to material alms should not be passed by.

Once a child's eyes have been opened, how well it will know how to be good!

TRAINING IN SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY (1)

To AWAKEN the child to solicitude for the poor and the wretched is a splendid thing. However parents do not fulfill their whole duty, if they fail to give it a sense of responsibility for the common good and a true concept of cooperation.

Instinctively the child refers everything to its own small personal interest. If it is not taught very early to concern itself for others, it will be in danger of becoming narrow and selfish, of being forever oblivious to the general welfare, in other words, of never achieving a social sense.

While the child is very young this training will not consist in formal instructions but rather in a constant directing of attention on a thousand different occasions to the fact of having to be concerned about others. It will be taught to go upstairs without making a noise because mamma is resting; not to slam the doors because little brother or little sister is asleep; not to play noisily near papa's study. The child will learn very early in this way the social consequences of its actions.

The child may be with the whole family to meet someone at the station; the parents will have a fine opportunity to show it how selfish it is to stand directly in doorways and passages as it loves to do, since that obstructs the entrances and exits for people coming in from trains or those who merely wish to leave

that way.

If a little girl accompanies her mother on a shopping trip, she can be taught not to ask the clerk to display more goods than necessary because it will all have to be refolded and replaced after she leaves.

At basketball or football, it is not so important to be a star player oneself as to bring the team to victory. It is true sportsmanship and true nobility to renounce a personal triumph by passing the ball to a fellow player who will assure the victory because he is in a better position or better qualified.

"Point out to us the lessons of the football game," a young sportsman asked his older friend. And he gave the one that extols the virtue of renunciation: "I will pass my chance to him"—the sacrifice of selfish or vain calculating with a view to the result for the whole.

The child can be shown that when there is question of committing an infraction of discipline in school, he ought to avoid it not so much because of the effect on the teacher—"He who budges will have to deal with me"—but rather the disturbance it causes for his comrades whose attention is distracted and progress retarded. Discipline was not invented for the comfort of the teacher but for the good of the pupils.

In this way, theoretical teaching is preceded by the practical background of the child in an atmosphere of cooperation, of social interchange of help. Every occasion for practice of this type should be accompanied by an explanation that later they must always act with like consideration in the office, the factory, the army or in whatever community they may be.

Once the children are old enough to understand more theory, every opportunity to instill doctrine should be seized: An international problem arises: Selfishness or mutual help? What does the Church say on this point? What does the Gospel say? Or perhaps it is a problem of relations between employer and workers, a strike in the father's factory or in the city. Here too, what does the Church say? What does the Gospel command. Selfishness or reciprocal understanding?

Trained in this fashion the young will be ready and quick to understand the social or international doctrine of the Church when they are old enough to be taught it academically. They will not oppose correct principles, as they only too often do with a wall of prejudices or pseudo-traditions, when their religion or philosophy teachers explain them.

TRAINING IN SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY (2)

WE HAVE accomplished a good deal if we have accustomed the child to put itself as much as possible "in the place of others." "If I were in such and such a situation, what would I do, what would I think?" We are all wrapped up in ourselves as in a cocoon, the child more than anyone else; particularly if it has been coddled, if it has been born into a family that is comfortably fixed, if it gets accustomed or others make it accustomed to being waited on.

The child must be encouraged to wait on itself and to give service. If for any reason the mother needs to hire help, that is no reason for the child to monopolize such help to its own comfort; it should never be permitted to give direct orders to domestic help.

As much as possible, especially in the case of little girls, the child should be given the opportunity to do many little tasks that make family life run more smoothly: to set the table, to dust up a room, to arrange

a bouquet, to take care of the baby. Such assignments should not be presented to them as burdensome tasks but as an aid toward the common good, a lightening of mamma's work so that they are joyful about it even if it demands an effort, upsets their well-laid plans or requires a sacrifice. Often the child will be delighted, proud of its importance. However care must be taken to appeal not to vanity but to responsibility.

A delicate point to consider is the question of friendships. Should the child be permitted to associate with children who are not as we say of their class? They will meet in school. If these possible friends are morally good and well- mannered, why not? It will offer a fine opportunity to show that money is not everything, that the only true worth is virtue and human dignity. The child may be too much inclined to pair off only with those who belong to the same social circle or environment; that flatters its vanity. The parents should react to this tendency by teaching the little one that it ought to share with a comrade who is less privileged and while avoiding indiscriminate associations with anybody and everybody, seek out as friends not the best dressed but those who are the best students, the most truly pious, the strongest personalities for good, in a word, those that deserve most esteem.

Should the family circumstances require sacrifices, show the child that there are people who are poorer; silence all jealousy. When the time comes for a choice of profession direct the boy or girl to choose judiciously not according to possible profit or financial returns but according to the possibilities for best serving society, the common good.

Generous parents will not hesitate, if the child's qualifications are adequate and the opportune moment presents itself, to speak of vocations of complete consecration, the priesthood, religious life. There are so many needs in the world. "The harvest indeed is great, but the laborers are few." They enlist their children's interest. A priest? Why not he? A religious? Why not she?

That supposes a spirit of detachment in the parents, an informed appreciation for the needs of the Church, love of the general good of Christianity, the sacrifice of little hopes for building up a new family. Yes, it means that.

Such parents will often call attention to the distress of the world; to the struggle of nations among themselves. They will explain to their children that union alone is fruitful; furthermore that union alone is truly Christian.

What an inspiring example do those children have whose father has always been a man of broad sympathies and a generous heart, highly social-minded; if in his profession he has always tried to serve rather than merely to earn money; if a lawyer, he has always been concerned for justice; if an industrialist, he has applied himself to bettering the human aspects of production; if a merchant, he has been attentive to injure no one; if a doctor, he has sacrificed himself to do the most possible good; if an employee, he has given his time loyally and honestly to his work—a worker eager for work well done and the social defense of his profession.

The boy and girl learn from this to consider their chosen professions or careers as future social service. They get out of their narrow selfish views which formerly warped their characters—they emerge with souls truly formed.

TRAINING IN SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY (3)

IF WE are alert to seize the occasions, everything can serve to teach children to guess or at least to

understand the needs and requirements of others.

A little girl who could no longer be called a baby had not as yet any brother or sister. One day she noticed her mother busy with the details of a layette. She asked, “Is all that for Liette, mamma?” She was Liette. “No dear, not for Liette, but for a little brother or sister who is going to come.”

Liette was utterly stupefied. What was this? Mother was not working only for her then!

The first school for social consciousness is the family. What a handicap if mother has never worked for anyone but Liette, if Liette remained an only child! We can readily guess what selfishness she would have been capable of displaying.

The family is together. “It’s so stuffy here, I’m going to open the window.” “No, grandmother has a cold.” The child understands it is not alone; others count.

The family lives in an apartment. The children are making an uproar. “Gently, children; we must not disturb the people downstairs. Not so much noise.” Others count.

The little girl is learning how to keep house. She shakes her dust cloth out of the window. “Did you look to see if someone was passing by?”

To know that other people exist and to understand that we must restrain ourselves for them is the root of social consciousness. A person would think that we all would have it and to spare.

Unfortunately experience proves otherwise.

Mother and child go to a neighboring park for play. How tempting to make little sand piles all along the bench beside mamma!

“You will see, I will not get you dirty mamma.”

“No, my little one, but you are not thinking of the people who may come in a little while to sit on this bench.”

- The street as well as a public garden can offer opportunities for such lessons. “Step aside dear. Don’t you see that mother who is pushing her baby buggy; let her pass.”
- On the streetcar: “Give your place to the lady.”
- In a train. “Take turns sitting by the window.” “Let’s not speak so loud; it will disturb other people’s conversation or their reading.”
- On a visit. “The steps have just been scrubbed; clean your shoes on the mat and walk along the edge so as not to track them up for the lady.”

All this is rounded out in Catechism lessons. “Then in heaven I will be with some poor little child, won’t I?”

Children of poor families should be taught the dignity of poverty and labor, the duty of contributing one’s best efforts to lift the living conditions and social status of their group.

Children of wealthy families should be taught their responsibility toward the working classes; they should be taught how far material, moral, and spiritual destitution can go and what they ought to do to learn how to remedy it.

TRAINING IN SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY (4)

WE HAVE not done everything when we have given children the idea and the desire of going to the aid of the poor. There is something better to be done. That is to teach them gradually to try to prevent misery from invading the poor world. We shall never succeed completely in checking it, but what a beautiful work it is to try to spread more happiness among men!

As children grow and reach an age of keener perception and of deeper reflection show them that the problem involves:

The relations of social classes with one another; The relations of nations toward one another.

Within a single country, there are those who have what they need, those who have more than they need, those who have not even the essentials.

Is it not fundamental to establish a condition in the world in which the fewest people possible lack the necessities of life or better in which the most people possible can attain a sufficient possession of the goods of the earth, the culture of the mind and the knowledge of supernatural riches?

To the degree in which we are impregnated with the spirit of the Gospel, we will desire that our brothers about us are not only cured of their wounds but preserved as far as they can be from possible wounds and established in a state of adequate human development, and of adequate divine development.

To dress a wound that has been infected is a good deed; to prevent a wound from being inflicted is a better deed. To prearrange indemnity for those who fall into unemployment is good; to strive for a status of work in which unemployment is prevented is better.

Now the conditions of modern living, the economic equipment of society, have thrown a whole section of society into a situation in which life has become very hard, in which “earning one’s living” has become a terrible problem.

Young boys and girls must be taught to realize these facts as they grow up. They must open their minds to an understanding of the social problems in their most agonizing aspects; they must prepare themselves to work to the best of their ability to counteract these evils.

When the social questions are concerned with relations between peoples of different nations, then how many problems crop up! Wars, even after treaties have been signed, leave hearts embittered. New difficulties arise. A very correct idea of patriotism is of capital importance!

Is periodic war between nations justifiable? Ought we not do everything in our power to constitute a state of peace in the world by an honest agreement between nations?

What procedures should we follow that these desirable understandings be effective?

What virtues must be developed in order to reconcile at one and the same time concern for national dignity, love of peace, brotherhood according to God.

How can we get different peoples to live together side by side without the grave interests of any group suffering even though each nationality remains deeply concerned for its own greatness?

A whole education on these points must be given.

THE FAMILY AND THE SCHOOL

To CHOOSE a school and then to help the school are two great duties of the family.

TO CHOOSE A SCHOOL. It is quite clear that a Catholic family ought to choose a Catholic school. On every level of education when there is a choice between a Catholic school and a public school, Christian parents have the serious duty to prefer the one which speaks of God and Christ rather than the one which sins by omission.

It is a duty and a serious duty for many reasons:

First of all when Catholics practically bleed themselves to death financially to maintain their schools, not to profit by their sacrifice is to do them grave injustice. Then, and this is serious, even when there need be no fear of the danger of immorality, the very fact of the mixed religions necessarily involved is a danger for the child's faith since because of this variety, the education offered is severed from all allusion to things eternal. It is by a regrettable amputation that educators pretend to isolate in the human being, the merely human vocation and the supernatural vocation. We have not been created to be human beings pure and simple but divinized human beings. Educators can work in vain, secularization will accomplish nothing in changing this truth. It is just that way. The same holds for the education the parents give to supplement that of the school; it is immeasurably harmful for the moral life of young minds and young hearts never to hear mentioned that which alone counts for life. That is, however, how so many generations have become accustomed to put life on one side and religion on the other as if they were separate water-tight compartments.

To count on the school alone, especially when it is neutral, to equip children adequately for life is a grave delusion. Spencer, that English realist, once wrote:

"The one who would want to teach geometry by giving Latin lessons or who believed he could teach pupils to play the piano by drawing would be considered crazy. He would be just as reasonable as those who pretend to improve the moral sense by teaching grammar, chemistry, or physics."

An education, even a solid education that is purely secular is insufficient for the full development of the moral sense and the adequate formation of character.

TO HELP THE SCHOOL. After the school has been carefully chosen, the family still has the duty to help the teachers in their task. Therefore, parents, older brothers and sisters should:

- Show new interest in the children's studies not as they often do through vanity but through real interest in the children.
- Never contradict the disciplinary measures that teachers thought necessary; if a punishment has been inflicted at school or a schedule decided upon, the pupil's family ought to support it and express themselves as being in accord with it.
- If necessity has obligated them to put a child in a secular school, supplement the regrettable deficiencies of the school by competent religious instructions; they must also exercise vigilance over the friendships and associations the children form.

They should exercise vigilance in this regard even when the school is of the highest moral standard; particularly careful must they be of the influences of doubtful companions the children might become

acquainted with on their way to and from school. Along with the school and the home we must take account of the influence of the streets.

THE SECULARISM OF CHRISTIANS

WE ARE not concerned here with refuting the doctrines of secularism. Every Christian ought to know the mind of the Church on this subject; we need not go back to ancient documents either to discover it. It is enough to recall the Encyclical, "*Summi Pontificatus*," issued by Pius XII in 1939 at the beginning of the Second World War.

Denouncing the aggressive encroachment into the field of religion by some present-day particular doctrines, he traced even farther back the source of the evil which has poisoned the whole life of Europe; he pointed to the doctrines which tried to build up the present and the future of humanity by getting rid of God and getting rid of Christ.

The problem now is to determine which of the unfortunate species of secularism has invaded me, my home, my habits, and which now may dominate me.

Of course there is no question of a denial of God or of Christ. But what place do they hold in my family life? In my daily life, in my profession, in my participation in civic affairs?

Has it not often happened that in choosing schools or colleges for their children so-called Christian parents often evidence a utilitarian materialistic spirit; they give lame reasons for choosing the secular colleges instead of a Catholic college—the teachers are better, the chances for success after graduation are more certain. Are they so sure? And if by chance it were true? Do the souls of their children mean less than a diploma?

Has it not often happened that the influence of such Christian parents in their social and civic life was practically nothing as far as bringing the doctrines of the Gospel and the teaching of the Church to bear on those domains?

And even though they neglected nothing of the essential practices of their religion, was it not primarily mere formality rather than solid convictions; conformity or fashion rather than true worship? There was a great disparity between their external actions, their attitudes and real prayer, the living knowledge of the gift of God?

Is not following the doctrines and the morality of Christ nothing more than letting them be evident in my life and my family?

The world must be made over. In the light of an Apocalypse, terrible ruins have been effected. The edifice that was the European world appeared solid; the foundation stone was deficient. Are we going to build the new world on an equally fragile base? If we are, then, the causes remaining the same, the results must inevitably be the same. And we shall continue indefinitely to see renewed destructions. If God has no place in the foundations of the City with all that His inclusion implies, then how can the City remain standing? That is a thought expressed in an ancient psalm; there is no exception—the truth of this fact remains. The stability of nations and of society is bound up with eternal principles.

Am I sufficiently convinced of this? Do I not have much more confidence in human formulas than in the rule of complete truth? Do I not unconsciously try to establish human life only upon the human? Am I

not still and always, in spite of the lesson in world events, the victim of a deficient ideal, of inadequate principles?

I must Christianize my Christianity. I must make it evident in every department of my life—in my relations with my family and with society; in the opinions I hold regarding national and international issues. In all that depends on me there shall be one hundred percent Christianity.

FAMILY AFFECTIONS

THE family spirit, that traditional ensemble of convictions, ideals, and domestic practices which constitute the sacred patrimony of people united by the same blood, can exist without a very strong affection among the members. The family spirit is in itself something precious; but when it is merely a sort of collective egotism, it has been blemished; it is a beautiful fruit injured by a worm.

What an inspiring and noble reality family affection is! One author refers to it poetically, ". . . Beautiful families that travel as a group and as a choir on the road to heaven after the pattern of stars that are united in constellations in the firmament . . ."

How we ought to pity those husbands or wives and often young boys and girls who find the hours spent at home long; those husbands and wives who are bored with each other; those brothers and sisters who find one another's company monotonous and whose glance is ever on the door, the gate or the garage!

MUTUAL LOVE OF PARENTS AND CHILDREN: Joseph and Mary did not grow bored with Jesus; Jesus did not tire of the company of Mary and Joseph. It is said that love does not go backward. We do not find too many examples of parents who do not love their offspring but how many children neglect their father and mother with painful disregard! They explain it by saying that young people like to be together. But there is a time for everything. There are some who do not make enough of the part of the home in their lives. How strange it is that children can be so loving when they are little, so demonstrative, and when they grow up so adept at saddening their parents?

BROTHERLY AND SISTERLY LOVE: Where will we find love if not between brothers and sisters? "Who then will love you," Bishop Baunard asks, "if you do not love your brother. It is like loving yourself. I believe the etymology of the word frater, brother, is made up of these two words, fere *alter*, that is nearly another self."

The Count de Mun wrote in his "Memoirs, "It is sweet to me to have to speak in the plural when recalling the first years of my existence. I have a twin brother who has never been so much as a step away from me in my career. My life is his life, my joys have been his, and his successes mine. It is not Anatole and Armand, he and I, it is we."

Marshal Lyautey had a brother who was a colonel during the war of 1914; this brother manifested to all who spoke to him not only his admiration for Lyautey, the Governor of Morocco, but his deep affection.

One only had to hear Father Foch, a fine type of Jesuit, mention his brother Marshal Foch to sense his love; though he showed a complete reserve it was more eloquent than any discourse; his was a warmth of heart which a few restrained but touching words sufficed to express.

There should be place in the home for the affection that grandparents, uncles and aunts deserve.

On the children's birthdays, why not invite the godparents; they would enter better into their office.

“Men and women who have held children at the baptismal font, I remind you that you will have to render an account of them before God.” For their part, the children will get a better realization of this beautiful institution of Christian sponsorship.

If all the members of the family are to understand one another and love one another, each one must have a great virtue. The same training and the same blood are not sufficient; self-conquest is necessary. Bossuet expressed it well when he said, “Natures are always sufficiently opposite in character to create frequent friction in a habitual society. Each one has his particular disposition, his prejudices, his habits. One sees himself at such close range and one sees oneself from so many angles, with so many faults in the most trifling occurrences! One grows weary, imperfection repels, human weakness makes itself felt more and more, so that it is necessary to conquer oneself at every hour.”

THE HIERARCHY OF DUTIES

APOSTOLIC work if carried on inopportunely or immoderately can take a woman away from her home too much. Beyond a doubt, there are immense needs: help for the sick, catechetical instructions, guild meetings for the

Sisters, spiritual conferences, and in all of these, great charity can be exercised. It is much better for a woman to spend her time in such things than in lounging, or in numerous and useless visits, in exploring for the hundredth time some enticing department store. Nevertheless, the duties of the home remain her principal work: To plan, to arrange, to mend, to clean, to sew, to beautify, to care for the children. Insignificant duties? But what would that matter if they represented the Will of God? Are we not too often tempted to want a change? Impetuous zeal, poorly directed service, caprice under the guise of generosity seek to substitute for daily duty which perhaps has not much glamour about it but which is just the same wanted by God.

Would not the greatest charity in such a case be not to engage in works of charity but to remain faithfully at home and devote oneself to works which no one will speak of and which will win no one’s congratulations? Later when the children have grown up and settled, there may be leisure; then a large share in the apostolate will be open according to one’s strength and time. Until then, my nearest neighbor, without being the least bit exclusive about it but merely judging with a well instructed understanding, will be this little world that has established itself in my home.

Another danger besides excessive apostolic works that might ensnare some wives and mothers of families would be to give exaggerated place to exercises of piety. Did not one of the characters in a novel by George Duhamel lament this tendency? “I have heard priests say that some women have spoiled their married life by excessive attendance at religious ceremonies and they sighed, “Why did they get married if they had a religious vocation.”

There are unfortunately some husbands so superficially Christian that they see exaggeration in the most elementary and normal practice of piety on the part of the wife and mother. That is only too sadly true! Their judgment is worth nothing.

We are referring only to an actual excess that would really be considered such by a competent judge.

There is no doubt that a married woman, if she is a good manager and is not encumbered by some job outside the home, can find time for normal religious exercises and can even provide for meditation, spiritual reading, relatively frequent assistance at Mass, and reception of Holy Communion; time, after

all, is something that varies in its possibility for adaptations and compressibility and woman excels in the heart of putting many things into a small place.

If she suspects that her husband finds certain exterior acts of piety exaggerated, attendance at weekday Mass for instance, let her increase her private devotions somewhat, a little more meditation or spiritual reading when he is not around; whether he is right or not, it is better not to irritate him if grave consequences might result. That is how Elizabeth Leseur managed; never did she betray the least annoyance when disturbed in her devotions; she always answered her husband's call or his outbursts of irritation with a pleasant face.

Never neglect a duty but observe the order of their importance.

Nihil Obstat:
JOHN M. A. FEARNS, S.T.D.
Censor Librorum

Imprimatur:
✠ FRANCIS CARDINAL SPELLMAN
Archbishop of New York
June 1951

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